AUGUST 1.

Scripture selected for the day .- Psalm, xliii.

Religion, in its pure state, is all pleasure; as sin, when perfected, will produce nothing but pain and death. As the Christian is in a mixed state, and is imperfect, he is as much known by his fears and sorrows as by his joys. He has his seasons of pure religious joy, which arise,—1. From his hopes of the Divine mercy:—2. From the promises, "exceedingly great and precious:"—3. From the means of instruction and comfort:—4. And from the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as his

complete Saviour.

But the Christian has causes of sorrow and mourning different from those of the unconverted; and these arise,—1. From apprehensions of the Divine displeasure, fears that God will cut him off. At such times, he takes up the language of David,—"Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Will he be favourable no more?"—2. From the prevalence of sin with him.—3. From his proneness to earthly attachments, that the Almighty has so little of his thoughts and affections; this drives him to say,—"My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word."—4. From the smallness of his attainments, and the slowness of his progress in preparation for heaven.—5. From his outward enemies, Satan and the world, who too often prevail against him.

Still he asks himself, when his strength is a little revived, —"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the Health of my countenance and my God." But how may our joys become permanent, and our religious sorrows less prevalent?—1. By more simply resting on the promises relative to Christ.—2. By a more steady adherence to those exercises which lead the mind to God.—3. By seeking to acquire more

enlarged views of God as having an entire delight in showing mercy, and of the boundless merits of Christ.

— 4. By spiritual converse with Christians well established in grace.

Why then should a Christian be a man of sorrows? He is the only man on earth who has solid reasons for the purest joy: — "Rejoice in the Lord alway."

Do I know any thing of these joys and sorrows? If we know no changes; if our fears are never exercised about our state; if we have no trouble on account of sin, and no dread lest we should not be interested in the Divine favour; we have reason enough to fear and tremble too.

AUGUST 2.

Scripture selected for the day.- Isaiah, lxiii.

If men knew what salvation had cost, it might be expected that none would despise it, none neglect it. The Messiah here appears red in his apparel, and his garments like him who treadeth in the wine-vat, or as we have it in the Book of the Revelation, as "clothed with a vesture dipt in blood," the blood of those whom

he so gloriously conquered.

The enemies of our salvation are frequently mentioned in scripture, under the names of sin, the world, Satan, and death. Sin and Satan are described as being kings, as having subjects:—"Sin hath reigned unto death." "The God of this world, who now reigneth in the hearts of the children of disobedience." The world is at enmity with those who live godly; it possesses the most seducing qualities, and is an auxiliary to sin and Satan.

In reference to his triumphs over our spiritual enemies, Christ is often spoken of as a conqueror;—
"Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men."—
Psalm, lxviii. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be

ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."
—Psalm, xxiv. "He must reign till all enemies be put beneath his feet." Christ hath destroyed much of the power of these adversaries, in redeeming his people, and in setting up a kingdom which will spread till all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. He has conquered death; so conquered him, that the fear of his power is removed, and myriads of Christians have triumphed over him by faith, saying, "O death, where is thy sting?"

Christ did not conquer these enemies without a heavy conflict. The victory was not gained without the most patient perseverance, without the fiercest conflicts, and without incredible sufferings on the part of the Conqueror. But, at length, after having made an end of sin, conquered the world, defeated Satan, and completed his victory over death and the grave, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, there interceding and reigning till he shall have brought all enemies finally and for ever under his feet And now he is become mighty to save: in every age souls redeemed and saved by him have been entering the kingdom of heaven as more than conquerors through him that loved them.

What encouragement is here to the weak, the tempted, the despairing sinner! What ignorance it must be for men under the power of such combined enemies to suppose that they can save themselves! What a dreadful mistake, that sin should be thought a good, when the whole business of Christ on earth, and he an Almighty Saviour, was, to destroy sin! He did not put away sin, but by the sacrifice of himself.

AUGUST 3.

Scripture selected for the day .- Psalm, xxxix.

Many things contribute to render real Christians reluctant to die: some are full of doubts respecting their being really pardoned: they wish to wait till their evidences of interest in the Divine favour be more clear, and till they can say, - "I know in whom I have believed:" others have attachments which bind them down to earth, and make them afraid of the power which shall dissolve these tender ties: some have much of their business of life yet to do, children to educate and provide for, affairs deranged, and plans far from being accomplished: others are estranged from the work of leaving the world, by the want of heavenly affections; while others have so much fear arising from conscious guilt, that death is to them the king of terrors. Each of these is ready to say with the Psalmist in another place; - "O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more."

But in this Psalm, David appears like a person standing on the brink of Jordan, and looking with strong desire towards Canaan. He has the wilderness behind him, and has found nothing worth waiting for. He has overcome all inordinate attachments; and holds every thing so loosely, that there appears to be nothing here deserving of his stay; — "Lord, what wait I for?" The benefits of such a state of preparation as this are truly great. Such a person, having recalled his fond desires and large expectations from the world, will be more active in finishing the work assigned him. He will be more intent on the coming of the Divine kingdom; he will be less anxious about interests to which he has become comparatively dead; and less vexed with disappointment, seeing he has

laid up his treasure in heaven.

To what a state of dignity is he raised, who has

attained to a happiness not affected by the heaviest calamities of time; whose heart and conversation are in heaven, and who is expecting a good endless in its duration, and respecting which he cannot be disappointed! His hope is placed on God, and this leaves him nothing to wait for here.—"O Lord of Hosts,

blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

What an unhappy state is theirs who are waiting for some unattained good in the present state! They have toiled till old age approaches, and have caught nothing. The world has always deceived, and yet its promises are still credited. No happiness realized on earth; no desire to seek it in the favour of the Almighty; no hope in God; no reversion in a future state.

AUGUST 4.

Scripturs selected for the day .- Deuteronomy, xxxii.

No opposites can be greater than the opinions of men in health and in dying circumstances. In health, the world appears to be the highest good; but in sickness, the necessity of Christ as a Saviour is felt with an irresistible force: then men who have enjoyed the greatest share of the pleasures of the world, confess that the Christian has the advantage, and that it would have been well if they had listened to the voice of reason and conscience. These concessions are the honest convictions of the heart: they are the result of a two-fold experience: men have found the world a cheat; and now, in the solitude of retirement, and in the presence of eternity, they are sensibly taught the value of the hopes of the gospel by the want of them.

Nothing is more clear than this, that an irreligious life is an irrefragable proof of the want of wisdom:—
"The prudent foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself;

but the simple pass on, and are punished." In other words, a wise man considers his latter end. What does a dying wicked man think of a worldly life? What does he think of sin, and of the neglect of his spiritual interests? Does not his sin sting like an adder, and does he not acknowledge that it was an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God? What does he think of a future state? Does it not now appear to be very likely that God will bring him to judgment? And does he not say, 'O spare me, that I may secure an interest in the merits of Christ, before I go hence, and be no more seen; I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. O the terrors which I now feel; the demonstrations which I now possess, that the way of transgressors is hard!' Such are the opinions of a man sobered by the presence of death. But how is it with a true Christian, when he comes to die? Is he sorry that he forsook the paths of destruction, left a dissipated world, and bore the reproach inseparable from a holy life? No,—his language is,—

"Lord, I adore thy matchless grace,
That warn'd me of that dark abyss;
That drew me from those treach'rous seas,
And bid me seek superior bliss."

AUGUST 5.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, ii.

The gospel is a provision against all the calamities of time and eternity: it removes the guilt and power of sin; it subdues all spiritual enemies; it affords comfort in distress, and prepares the soul for eternal blessedness. We have had many histories of the living; but, if we could have a real history of the first few years in eternity of the remarkable persons there, written by inhabitants of those worlds, how interesting

they would be! No person has come back to tell us what first opens upon the mind, and what are the first impressions departed souls receive, after leaving the body,—what the bar of God is,—and what the feelings of the spirit, when it finds itself in a fathom-less eternity. Some sincere Christians, meditating on the strange and alarming nature of all these circumstances, are all their life-time subject to the fear of death; while others are enabled to say,—"We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the

body, and to be present with the Lord."

The apostle, in the chapter which we have just been reading, declares, that one reason why Christ became incarnate, was, that he might overcome Satan, who had the power of death, and thus deliver the captives. The things which make death so great an object of dread, are, -1. The extinction of animal life, or the separation of soul and body: this fear Christ removes, as the Author and Giver of eternal life. - 2. Reflections on the state of the body in the grave: but the Saviour has himself been entombed; and this will be the last evil sin can bring upon the Christian. - 3. Views of the Divine purity and justice, and recollections of transgressions; but Christ has by his atonement satisfied the Divine justice; he has fulfilled the law; and brought in a righteousness which makes the believer just, and gives him a right to the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Thus Christ fulfils to the Christian the character which is here given him;—the Deliverer from the fear of death. No natural fortitude, no taking refuge in wrong principles, as those of the atheist, the infidel, and the self-righteous, can remove the fear of death, where a person has a right view of his own heart and life, and a correct knowledge of the Divine Government under which he has been enjoying innumerable favours, and of those laws which are perfect, but which he has been incessantly violating. Nothing short of real faith in the grace of Christ,

and in the promises of the gospel, can bear up the

mind under such a pressure.

If I love sin, I have every reason to fear death: for sin, I ought to remember, is the very sting of death. It is guilt lying on the conscience, which arms death with so much terror; as soon as sin is forgiven, death becomes gain.

AUGUST 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, vii.

The more we know of mankind, and the more we know of ourselves, the more shall we see of the importance of the doctrines of grace; and that these doctrines ought to be faithfully and fearlessly preached. and as thoroughly and heartily received, seeing the very life of religion within us, the very life of the churches, and the success of the ministry, depend upon it. Among these doctrines, that of Christ's ability to save, is most conspicuous. His ability is here said to rest upon his intercession. In the margin we have the word "evermore," instead of "uttermost:" if this word be admitted, the drift of the passage will be, -Seeing Christ ever lives to make intercession, he can save evermore, that is, at all times and in every extremity; or he can save all who shall come to him. to the end of time.

Art thou then in the lowest state of despair, on account of the fearful sense which thou hast of thy sinfulness? He is able to save thee. Art thou in the furnace of temptation, and is Satan dipping his arrows in the concupiscence of thy heart, and threatening to hurry thee into the pit which he hath dug for thee? Christ can save thee, though thou art in the fiery furnace, and though it should be heated seven times hotter than usual. Hast thou fallen, since tasting that

the Lord is gracious? Still thou hast an Advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Here then lies all christian safety,—the intercessions of Christ: these intercessions will prevail against all our enemies, for our pardon, and for every supply. He can save evermore, at all times, in all dangers and extremities, when all hope of being saved from every other quarter is cut off. Yea, when heart, and flesh, and friends, and outward means, all fail, we shall not then be lost, though the sins of our former life threatened to swallow us up.

AUGUST 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, xii.

All parts of this visible creation are full of wonders. of wonders which have excited the admiration of all ages. In Europe, Etna and Vesuvius are standing wonders: the system of modern astronomy unfolds the most astonishing phenomena. If this lower world, then, contain wonders, which arrest the attention of mankind in every age and country, we may readily imagine that heaven, compared with which, earth is but the vestibule of God's works, must boast of objects still more wonderful. One of the greatest of these wonders is here mentioned,—the church of Christ gathered from all ages, nations, and tongues, all possible gradations of society, out of a state of unspeakable degradation and misery, and raised to consummate happiness in the presence of God. This the Apostle John calls "a great wonder."

Unconverted men suppose that attaining heaven is one of the easiest things imaginable: this is, however, far from being the voice of scripture, which says, —"Strive to enter in at the strait gate," "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Look at the state of a single sinner

before conversion, - ignorant, averse to God, deprayed, and bent on his own way, though it may end in ruin, without the least pre-disposing quality to facilitate his conversion. After his conversion, he is still prone to backslide, and he is tempted every hour to depart from the living God. Lot's wife is far from being a solitary character. A thousand times more than we can conceive, is to be done for every sinner; and every new case presents a variety increasing the difficulties; thus it appears, that, to meet the circumstances, and remove the obstacles in the way of the salvation, of so vast a portion of mankind, nothing less was required than the constant employment of the same wisdom and power by which the world was formed. Collect all these cases, -all these Manassehs, all these Sauls, all these Jerusalem sinners, all these prodigals; and then we shall be able to form some distant idea of the church as the wonder of heaven. A structure formed of such materials, and shining with such splendour, may well excite the admiration of angels. This is the holy temple in which every heart and every voice shall be tuned to celestial harmony; and this is the theme, this the rapturous song, which the redeemed sing; ---"Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

What a wonder it will be, to see there in one harmonious happy family, the European, the Esquimaux, the Laplander, the Hottentot, the Indian, the African, the Mahometan, the Hindoo; yea, myriads from all nations and languages, — all purified, all rescued from the most powerful enemies, saved from the most bewitching snares, from inveterate habits, and innumerable natural and moral evils, and all joining in one song of praise, and all filled with unutterable

joy, inheriting eternal life.

AUGUST 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Jeremiah, xxxi.

Without the favour and image of God, if a person possessed the whole contents of the material world, he would be poor indeed; and destitute of all real dignity, though the universe were prostrate, to do him homage. Indeed, without the Divine favour, health is sickness, honour is infamy, and life itself is death.—"In his favour is life."

But who is there among men, whom we can suppose to have been thus the objects of everlasting love? Sinners, as such, cannot be in the favour of a holy Being; they are, rather, children of wrath; and no person can have the least right to suppose that he is in the Divine favour, unless he possess those marks which distinguish the righteous from the wicked. The righteous are distinguished by a sincere compunction on account of being so unworthy of the Divine goodness; by their filial fear and holy confidence in God; by their sincere attachment to whatever has issued from the Divine hand, whatever shares in the Divine regards; by the desire of nearer approaches to God in devotional exercises, and in the disposition of their minds; and by an anxiety for perfect conformity to his will and image. These are as really marks of the Divine favour towards an individual, as the royal apparel and crown were of the favour of Ahasuerus, when Mordecai, wearing these, and riding on the king's horse, was led through the streets of Shushan, the herald proclaiming before him, - "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

How astonishing does this love appear, when we consider the difficulties obstructing the gracious intentions of the Almighty towards these objects of his pity! He had to sacrifice his Son, before their sins could be removed: he had to conquer a rooted

enmity existing in their hearts, and a criminal preference of other objects. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, when we were enemies, Christ died for us; when we were afar off, he drew us to himself; when we were unholy, he put upon us the garment of salvation; when we were unwilling, he made us willing in the day of his power; when we were destitute of strength, he worked in us to will and to do of his good pleasure; when we were in the hands of merciless enemies, he rescued us; when diseased, he healed us; when on the very brink of ruin, he sought and found us.

O what wonderful, matchless grace is this! But, if God has done all this already, and is making preparations in the heart for a Divine perfection, what a destiny must await creatures thus loved, thus re-

deemed, and thus prepared!

AUGUST 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—2 Timothy, iii.

The character of Christ as a Saviour arises out of the condition of man as a sinner. The Bible was never intended to be a book to meet the views of the historian, the naturalist, the philosopher, or the astronomer; but it exactly meets the wants of creatures in the circumstances of mankind, weak, dependent, deprayed, and yet immortal. We are in a state of darkness; the word is a light, not to show us every thing, but by which to walk in the paths of life, as a lantern in a dark night. In reference to a state of moral death, the word is said to quicken the mind of the believer, and to be the great instrument of regeneration. We are surrounded with temptations :-"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." It is a guide to youth; for such a person is to expect preservation by taking heed to his way under the direction of the word. In reference to a state of distress, it is the word of consolation; to a state of moral distance, it is the word of reconciliation: to a state of warfare, it is the sword of the Spirit; to a state of impurity, it is the truth by which we are sanctified. Above all other things, the scriptures are intended to make us wise unto salvation, by imparting the knowledge of the only true God, of his perfections, of his law and government, and of his Son Jesus Christ, that is, of the way of salvation by him; and this knowledge is connected with eternal life.

In order that they may make us wise unto salvation, the truths they contain must be believed; for, if not believed, the Bible will be to us the same as any other book; we may be pleased with its historical facts; we may admire its ethics; but we shall not be made wise unto salvation by it. This book contains threatenings; if believed, they will produce a salutary alarm in our minds, and excite us to inquire what we must do to be saved. It contains promises and invitations; but, in order that we may be benefited by them, we must be induced hereby to turn to God, and live. It holds up Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour; but, that he may be such to us, this testimony respecting Christ must be so believed, that we may be induced to give up ourselves to him, as a patient to his physician, as a disciple to his teacher. It reveals to us the doctrines of a resurrection, a future judgment, and everlasting rewards and punishments; but, without faith in these accounts, we shall not seek to be ready when the Son of Man cometh. When thus believed, the most important effects are produced by them :- "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold." Our Lord himself says, -" Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life."

AUGUST 10.

Scripture selected for the day .- Jeremiah, iii.

The sacred scriptures describe the state of man before conversion, as a state of distance: the prodigal is said to have gone into "a far country;" the Ephesians are described as those who were formerly afar off, but who, by redemption and conversion, had been brought nigh. This state of nearness to God is distinguished by several circumstances: penitent sinners are reconciled to him by the death of his Son; they are also brought to possess a disposition to delight in God; they are adopted into his family, and made his sons and heirs. Such is the happy state

of every Christian.

From this state Christians are apt to decline. Remaining depravity and outward allurements often bring on what is called by the prophet, "backsliding," that is, a sliding back to the whole state of distance from God in the thoughts and affections of the heart. This leads to estrangedness from true Christians, in whom formerly the person had all his delight, to alienation from the word of God, from the public services of religion, and those other means which God has graciously appointed in his church for the perfection of his saints. Then the backslider sinks into unlawful conformities to the world, and into the indulgence of evil tempers, if not of evil habits, which God had enabled him to overcome. He becomes insensible to his real condition, and to the awful nature of these relapses, though he is far from being a happy man: he knows that he was once happy, but now all his religious joys are fled, and the world cannot satisfy him.

But the Almighty calls this wretched wanderer to return: he does this either by gentle means, or by filling the backslider with his own ways. When he

returns, the wanderer says,—"Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt boun-

tifully with thee."

Let us then walk humbly with God, resist the first temptation to evil, and cleave close to him, remembering, that the backslider is excluded from all happiness; and that he knows not how far he shall fall, his restoration depending entirely on the mere mercy of the Redeemer, whose word is,—"To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit on my throne." "If he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Let those who have been preserved from falling, ascribe all the praise to him who keepeth Israel. All our safety lies in knowing our weakness, our propensity to fall, and in cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart.

AUGUST 11.

Scripture selected for the day .- 1 Timothy, iii.

The way in which many nominal Christians celebrate the birth of Christ, forms the strongest possible proof of their being wilfully ignorant that "for this the Son of God was manifest, that he might destroy

the works of the devil."

Recollecting the descriptions of the majesty and glory of God contained in the Scripture, let us place these descriptions by the side of those which relate to the humiliation of Christ, when "he took upon him the form of a servant," "became poor," "humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross." The apostle seems to admire the condescension of Christ, that he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. But how

wonderful, that Jehovah should be willing to take the likeness of sinful flesh, to be "made sin for us when he knew no sin," and to bear the whole load of shame, infamy, guilt, and punishment, due to sinners!

But, if the Saviour who thus humbled himself, was the true and living God, then, -1. The work he did must have been infinitely perfect, and his obedience and death become a proper ground of hope for a sinner: his blood is, in value, the blood of God, Acts, xx. 28; his righteousness, the righteousness of God, Philippians, iii. 9; and hence believers are said to be "complete in him."—2. If Jesus Christ was God, then the christian religion becomes infinitely important. This great truth gives an inconceivable weight to the promises, the invitations, the precepts, the threatenings, and the prospects of the gospel; since they are all connected, not with the name of a mere prophet, but with the manifestation of Immanuel, God with us. By this truth the sanctions of religion are made to appear infinitely awful: they that despise, despise not man, but God; they trample on the blood of the Son of God; they reject the righteousness of God; and therefore they will be considered as worthy of far greater punishment than those who despised the law of Moses. If the incarnate Saviour was God, then we need not wonder at the promises made to him and his church respecting the extent of his kingdom. He will thoroughly destroy the works of Satan, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Let me examine whether the end of this interposition have been answered in my conversion. If f remain without any personal spiritual benefit from Christ's coming, then I have little cause for joy. If I be not saved by him, my sin remaineth.

AUGUST 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Philippians, iv.

The angels at the birth of Christ announced peace to the earth. Our Lord, before he left the earth, said to his disciples,—"My peace I leave with you;" and almost every epistle to the churches begins with the salutation of peace:—"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

This sacred peace is opposed to the enmity against Jehovah, which exists in man by nature. Man is opposed to the law of God; is not satisfied with his providence; is averse to the method of salvation by grace; and goes about to establish his own righteousness. All this is removed, when the person becomes "reconciled to God by the death of his Son."-2. It is peace of conscience, by a removal of guilt and fear, through faith in that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. -3. It is peace arising out of a Divine temper towards men and all the creatures. — 4. It is peace in the midst of trouble:—"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." "Behold the upright; the end of that man is peace."-5. It is called "the peace of God:" peace resembling that existing in the Divine mind; peace founded upon order; peace from above, and enjoyed in communion with God. 5. It is said to "pass all understanding:" it does so, as it respects its Divine source and its perfection. It proceeds from the Holy Spirit; and by its possession the believer is made a partaker of the Divine nature. In its perfection in heaven it will be boundless and never-ending, resembling the unruffled bosom of the unfathomable deep. But who can penetrate fully into the nature of that peace which is called here "the peace of God which passeth all understanding?"-7. The effect of this peace is, to keep the heart and

mind from unnecessary fears, and from rash mistakes,

and to fix it in a settled composure.

Upon what is our peace founded? Is it like the calm which precedes the dreadful tornado in the West Indies? The peace enjoyed by the wicked in the present state is like the repose of the dead in a cemetery: it will be broken up by the terrible annunciation of the last judgment. What a state of anarchy will be presented in the place of torment; a prison where all the sons of disorder will be collected, and all the passions inflamed to madness!

AUGUST 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Proverbs, iv.

How often do we hear men say, What need of so much earnestness and diligence in religion? Can we not be saved without passing our whole lives in a state of melancholy?—Others urge, that a person ought to follow the religion of his forefathers; thus denying the necessity of all personal anxiety whether we be right or wrong. Another says, We shall not be punished intensely, or long, though every power we have, and every moment of our time, have been devoted to transgression. The fact is, and it is recognised by scripture, that men before conversion are all mistaken:—"They are all gone out of the way: there is none that understandeth." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

It would not perhaps be incorrect to venture the assertion, that every man by nature has a religion of his own; his own mind being legislator, his own conjectures forming his creed. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." "The heart is deceitful above all things: he that trusteth his own heart, is a fool."

The state of man before conversion is called "the error of his way;" it is so, if we consider, that he prefers himself to God; his own opinions to the Divine word; his own passions to the Divine commands; his own plan of life to the Divine order; the interests of time to those of eternity; the gratification of the body to the improvement and salvation of his soul; and the pleasures of transgression to those which are at God's right hand. Many would insinuate, -It is enough that we were born Christians, have been baptized, have received the sacrament, and practise christian morals; denying the necessity of faith in the atonement,—of regeneration, of self-denial, and of the assistance of the Spirit, to the performance of duty. Are not these most palpable errors; and yet who understands them as such? There is indeed no end to the errors of creatures who have lost the centre of attraction, the blessed God.

Let us dread continuance in a natural state; resting in the forms of religion without its influence; and indulging the hope of salvation while living in sin, and

destitute of faith in Christ.

AUGUST 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, xxxv.

The Holy Spirit teaches the humble, but leaves the proud to be ever learning, though never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.—"The law of the Lord maketh wise the simple." "The Lord preserveth the simple." "The simplicity that is in Christ" is the best pledge that God has not ceased to care for the guidance of the person who possesses it.

The Divine word is plain itself, for its truths are no where delivered in a systematic form; and it is

well worthy of notice, that the subjects found so intelligible in the Bible, are often treated, in human writings, so as to perplex the generality of readers. This simplicity in revealing the most profound truths is perfectly inimitable; what mechanic, but can understand the beatitudes, and the discourses following them?

These persons, called "way-faring" men, depend also on the Divine guidance, and cannot therefore fatally err. Hence the Apostle John says,-"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "The unction which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you." The doctrine of the Divine nature is very mysterious; but, when the Holy Spirit impresses the mind with a sense of its sinfulness and extreme danger, the man has recourse to the Father as the Fountain of mercy; to Christ as to him who has said,—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;" to the Holy Spirit, as to the infallible Guide, the Sanctifier, and the Comforter. Thus to the way-faring man the whole mystery of the Godhead becomes practically plain. Indeed, who can conceive of the refreshing properties of water, like the man, though unlettered, who has just quenched his thirst? The evidences of Christianity address themselves chiefly to our moral powers. As some men have a natural aptitude to acquire some art or science, so all Christians have a spiritual aptitude to understand and to feel the deepest interest in the doctrines of the Divine word.

How thankful should we be, that truths, relating to heavenly mysteries, the nature and operations of the Deity, and to our eternal welfare, are level to the capacity of the most unlettered Christian!

AUGUST 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelations, iii. 11—22.

The Holy Scriptures are of unspeakable value in their unerring delineations of character, and in holding up the final result of every mode of human conduct.

Our Lord foresaw that some in his visible kingdom would enter on a profession of the gospel with undecided feelings; and that others, after having been once zealous, would become cold and formal:— "Many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able;" "He that putteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is unfit for the kingdom of heaven;" "Remember Lot's wife;" "Lord, Lord, open to us;—I never knew you, depart." The grand fault of all these persons was not, that they had no sense of religion, but that they had not enough.

But why is such a state of heart and conduct so offensive to the Almighty? It is a reflection upon his wisdom in providing salvation, and upon the Lord Jesus for enduring so much to secure it. It pronounces the influences of the Spirit a useless gift to mankind. It sets aside all the exhortations to anxiety and activity found in the Divine word. It affords encouragement to worldly men to go on in the neglect of religion, and it hardens them in sin. Even profligate Rochester would say, that if he could believe the gospel, he should certainly think it his duty to follow it with the most entire ardour. In short, to be lukewarm in religion, or trifling where a soul is in danger of being lost, is giving up heaven without an effort or a sigh. On these accounts, a lukewarm professor is an object of dread to the sincere Christian, and is abandoned of God. with marks of unutterable detestation: -"I would

thou wert cold or hot; so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will cast thee out of my mouth."

AUGUST 16.

Scripture selected for the day .- 2 Corinthians, v.

1. The goodness of God lays the foundation for unlimited confidence, whenever we approach him, provided the objections in our character and circumstances can be removed. Towards all sinless creatures his goodness flows in a continual stream; and he rejoices over them, to do them good. Every creature partakes of the Divine goodness, and every sinner not in a state of punishment is a monument of sparing goodness; his very blasphemies tell us, that God is good. But, as long as we contemplate the Almighty merely as a Being inflexibly just, we can have no confidence in him: it is only as he is seen in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, that a sinner can feel this confidence. -2. It is by faith in the death of Christ, as opening a way for the procession of the mercy of God, that a sure foundation of hope is laid. Without this, the offender is ready to say, How shall I lift up my eyes to heaven, when the law and justice of God, the Divine threatenings, and my own conscience, all stand up against me? But, if Immanuel's face appear, if he stand as a Lamb slain in the Divine presence, and as my Advocate; then I can come with boldness to the throne of grace, and look up with filial confidence towards God. It is on this rock that the believer takes his place, and calmly sees the billows break with harmless fury at his feet. -3. The promises of Scripture, which open wide the gates of mercy, and are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, strengthen this confidence. - 4. The

faithfulness of God confirms it; and shows him, that "though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet the kindness of God shall not depart

from him."

We see, then, that this is the confidence of faith; faith in a sacrifice of Divine appointment, and through the Eternal Spirit offered up without spot to God; faith in a perfect righteousness; faith in the Divine mercy coming in a way consistent with the demands of justice; faith in the promises, and in the unchanging nature of the Promiser.—1. It is a filial confidence: that of a child calling to its Father; that of a friend approaching one who is both a Friend and a Benefactor.—2. An humble and grateful confidence; the confidence of a broken heart encouraged by the exuberance of the Divine goodness.—3. An unbounded confidence, having no limits in its expectations, and free from doubts and fears:—"we are confident, and willing to depart."

But, wherever this unlimited confidence prevails, it will be united with a tender conscience, and prevailing humility. Let us beware of that confidence which can exist while the heart is carnal. Let us fear to lose that confidence which disarms death, makes the possessor willing to depart, and gives to eternal objects their full dimensions, their undiminished

charms.

AUGUST 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Peter, i. 8—25.

Some persons would exclude the use of the passions altogether in religion. Happy the Christian who is enabled to fix his mind on the Lord Jesus in such a scriptural manner, that, without depending on his natural passions, all the effects of a sacred attach-

ment are produced in him. That Christ is precious to every believer, is a truth found in every part of the New Testament: — "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "To those that believe, he is precious." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed till the Lord come." "We love him, because he first loved us." "Whom, having not seen, ye love." This indeed is the universal secret by which Christians become known to each other all

over the world.

Who that has heard of Jesus Christ, has not admired him, has not been struck with something more than human in his character, in his miracles, and in the errand on which he came,—"to seek and to save that which was lost?" But a general admiration is not that love of Christ, which Peter here mentions: this is found only in those who have tasted the bitterness of sin; have come to the real knowledge of their spiritual state; who feel their obligations to Christ for snatching them from destruction, and for the privileges and hopes he has bestowed upon them; and who admire him for the excellency there is in his person. Attachment is excited by favours conferred; those conferred by Jesus Christ are unequalled; -by similarity of disposition; believers, as far as sanctified, have the same predilections and attachments as Jesus Christ;—by a similarity in the objects of pursuit; the glory of his heavenly Father was the object Christ set before him, and Christians glorify God in their bodies and spirits which are his; -by natural relation; believers are united to Christ by a spiritual relation; he is the Head, they are the members; he is the Son of God in the highest sense; they are sons of God by adoption; he is Heir of all things; and they are joint heirs with Christ.

AUGUST 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xxxvii.

True Christians are described in scripture by names which peculiarly designate their character: they are called "the wise," "the godly," "the righteous, "the upright;" and we are exhorted by the Psalmist to behold them, to mark them, especially their latter end;—

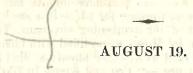
"Tis here resistless demonstration dwells, You see the man,—you see his hold of heaven."

How thankful we ought to be, that such demonstrations are afforded us of the unquestionable results of a life of faith. Hearing the blasphemies of the wicked, we are stunned for the moment, and are ready sometimes to ask, What then, is all I have seen, and heard, and read, false? Is the Bible a deception? Is experimental religion what some have termed it, rant and enthusiasm? Is there no account to be given hereafter? And are the things which I have heard, all human inventions? While I am thus shocked at the blasphemies of unbelievers, I hear a voice behind me, saying, - "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; the end of that man is peace." Go to the sick beds of those who have known the blessedness of true religion; see their patience, their resignation, their holy peace, their solid happiness .- "Lord, it is good to be here." I am now convinced, that the gospel, in its power on the heart, is the one thing needful, the blessed source of all present and future happiness.

Their end is peace,—peace in a storm, peace in the midst of a wreck, in the dissolution of nature; peace in the presence of a weeping family, in the immediate views of eternity!—This peace arises out of faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the extent and grace of the promises and invitations

of the Divine word. It was here, that the Christian obtained his first peace; and under every alarming view of his transgressions, he could obtain peace no where but in some such declarations as these,—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." The Christian then has peace in his end: he may not have extasies, nor be indulged with a triumph; but his end is peace, and this peace may, in its supporting nature, pass all understanding;—

"Heaven waits not the last moment,—owns her friends On this side death."



Scripture selected for the day.—Colossians, i. 1—20.

In nothing did the Old Testament dispensation come so near the New as in the way of explating sin: the animal was to be free from blemish; the sins of the people were confessed over its head; it was slain, offered on the altar, and part of its flesh burnt. The blood of Christ is eminently set forth and exalted by the New Testament writers, as the following passages will show. Paul declares to the elders of the church of Ephesus, that God purchased the church with his own blood. Peter says, that saints are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. To the Hebrews the apostle says, that Jesus sanctified the people with his own blood. The Apostle John says,-The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin: again in the Revelation, he declares, that he saw the saints in heaven ascribing glory to Christ who had washed them from their sins in his own blood. To the Romans, the apostle says, We are justified by the blood of Christ; to the Colossians, that Christ made peace

by the blood of his cross; to the Ephesians, that we are brought nigh by the blood of Christ; to the Hebrews, that the blood of Christ speaketh better things than the blood of Abel: and in the same Epistle the apostle says, We have boldness to enter into into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The final victory of believers is ascribed by the Apostle John, in his twelfth chapter of the Revelation, to the blood of Christ:—They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

All these benefits are ascribed to the blood of atonement, because,—1. It is the blood of a Divine person. Acts, xx. 28. It possesses therefore infinite merit; is efficacious to every purpose for which it is shed .-2. It is the blood of the everlasting covenant. The old covenant made by Moses was ratified with blood; but the new covenant with better blood: so that all the promises of it are,—"Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus."-3. It is the blood of expiation, it removes sin; of atonement, it brings nigh; of redemption, it is the price of our ransom from the hands of all our enemies. - 4. It was accepted by the Lawgiver as an equivalent for the personal obedience, or sufferings, of all who should believe. - 5. It was a sacrifice infinitely precious in the sight of God, and by which the Divine attributes will be for ever displayed before those who "delight themselves in the Lord." The apostle says to the Ephesians, -" Christ hath given himself for us, a Sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." This blood purges the conscience from all guilt, and removes its errors respecting confidence in dead works; and thus directs the man to worship God in an evangelical and acceptable manner.

These ideas are not difficult to be understood. Only let a man be troubled in spirit for sin, and enter his closet,—there these mysteries will all become plain: he pleads for pardon through the merits of Christ, and blesses God for opening so glorious a way of recovery. Now this is what a child, inclined to

pray, and sorry for his sins, is capable of doing. No heaven without washing our robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb.

AUGUST 20.

Scripture selected for the day .- 2 Corinthians, iv.

The Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says, "We were sometime darkness;" for the Colossians, he gives "thanks to the Father, who had delivered them from the power of darkness;" and Paul's commission was, to turn the Gentiles "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." These allusions to a state of darkness or ignorance are applicable to all mankind, of whom it is said,—"There is none that understandeth;" and this ignorance has reference to the nature and government of God, to the nature and effects of sin, to the value of spiritual mercies, to the vanity of temporal things, and to a future state.

This darkness is in a small degree dispersed by the light of education, and the advantages which men derive from the means of instruction around them. But, if this light irradiate the understanding merely, it will not influence either the heart or conduct. The apostlehere speaks of God's shining into the heart. O what painful discoveries! What evil imaginations, corrupt desires, envy, anger, revenge, malice, unbelief, alienation from God, blasphemous thoughts, and desperate propensities! Now the person knows what the scriptures mean, when they speak of the plague, the deceitfulness, the hardness, and the unbelief, of the heart. This is one effect of the illumination of the mind.

This discovery of the state of the heart has prepared the man for the true knowledge of God in Christ. He may have some knowledge of the Divine Being in his abstract and absolute character, and as the universal Lawgiver; but this knowledge only increases the terrors which he felt, on beholding the depravity of his heart. The knowledge which the apostle mentions, is that of the glory of God in the face or person of Jesus Christ; through which he sees that the glory of Jehovah most eminently shines in the person of Christ; and that a penitent sinner in no act of his life ever performs a work more acceptable to God than in believing on his Son, and devoting his life to the contemplation of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. These views influence the heart to the love of God, to trust and confidence; and produce a desire of perfect likeness to that which thus fixes the admiration, and delights the best feelings of the mind.

Let us examine the state of our minds. Are we concluding that our hearts are by nature good? Have we no fear, no uneasiness, no doubts? These are sad marks that we are still in gross darkness and under

the power of Satan.

AUGUST 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Timothy, iv.

Most men are alive to the subject of profit and loss; but the fatal mistake is, that the unconverted consult only the interests of time. Religion, when it takes root in the mind, always begins with serious reflection; and the truly awakened sinner always takes an impartial view of his state, and the results of opposite plans; — "What shall it profit me, if I gain the whole world, and lose my soul?"

But what is godliness? Perhaps we cannot better explain it than by saying, Godliness is the devotedness of the heart and life to the calls of religion.

The apostle here says, that godliness is a profitable thing, and assigns this as a reason for his assertion,—

it has "the promise of the life that now is." In many passages of scripture this pledge is given; - " Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these (temporal) things shall be added;" all on earth which will promote our eternal welfare, with this addition, that the things bestowed for the body shall be all blessings, even when they may not be joyous, but grievous,-affliction as well as health, and adversity as well as prosperity. But godliness has the promise of the life that is to come. Earth is too poor an inheritance for the believer: and nothing short of eternal life is commensurate with the generosity of Jesus Christ; - "I give unto them eternal life." Thus the apostle assigns the profits of both worlds to the Christian; and, as the Creator of all things is the Benefactor, this might be expected. If the highest happiness of the people of God consisted with their being rich in this world, all would be rich; but they must be poor and afflicted, for human nature will bear no better fare than this .- "How hardly shall they which are rich enter the kingdom of heaven!"

But the apostle declares that godliness is profitable to all things; that is, to men in all states and circumstances: - to youth; to restrain their appetites, to keep up in their hearts the fear of God, to make them wise and sober, and to induce them to devote their best days to the most important objects. It is profitable to the middle aged, amidst the cares and business of life; in order to prevent their sinking into that inordinate attachment to the world, and that eager pursuit of riches, which would drown them in perdition. It is profitable to the old; giving subjects of consolation to them in their solitude, and opening to them a world where they shall enter upon eternal life united to immortal youth and vigour. It is profitable to the rich; preventing them from resting in uncertain riches, and enlarging the heart so that they become common benefactors. It is equally useful to the poor; as it makes them content and thankful in poverty, and assures them that there is an inheritance

laid up for them, which cannot fade away. It is of the highest use to us in health; preventing us from abusing it, and exciting us to employ it well. In sickness, and in death, how profitable is godliness, and how wretched are men at these times without it!

AUGUST 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, xv. 20—34.

1. Our Lord foretold his own resurrection. -Matthew, xx. This was so generally known, that the Jews intreated for a guard over his body. We infer that Christ was a true Prophet, from the actual fulfilment of this and others of his prophecies: when he declared that he would rise from the dead, he also pointed out the manner of his death, which was literally fulfilled: this fact is appealed to in the presence of those very scribes and priests by Peter and Stephen; Acts, iii. vii. His prophecies respecting the day of Pentecost, the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecution and martyrdom of his disciples, were fulfilled in the same literal and exact manner. -2. The apostles, who suffered in every form that human malice could invent, and who died in bearing testimony to his resurrection, were all witnesses of this event: five hundred brethren saw him at once; they saw him ascend to heaven. They could not be deceived; for they repeatedly saw him, conversed with him, touched him, and had the demonstration which Thomas desired; and they were beyond measure incredulous on this subject. - 3. They preached the doctrine of Christ's resurrection immediately: so that the chief instigators of his death were alarmed, and told the disciples not to preach this doctrine, as they would bring this man's blood upon them, in turning the populace against them. They declared this fact,

therefore, before the face of the persons the most concerned to disprove it; they convinced multitudes, five thousand at once. Nay, so far were the leaders of the Jews themselves convinced, that they agreed to let the apostles alone, lest they should be found fighting against God.—4. The apostles, in consequence of the power which they had received from their risen Master, performed miracles.—5. Further, they gave up all ease, honour, and worldly prosperity, and submitted to persecution in all its terrors, and to death in all its horrors, in order to spread the knowledge of Christ crucified, and risen from the dead.

Believing, therefore, that Christ was actually raised from the dead, we infer,—I. The truth of Christianity; for, if the Saviour be not risen, then is all preaching vain, and we are yet in our sins; but being risen, God hath set to his seal, that the gospel is true: in the resurrection of the Founder we have the testimony of the Father; of him who raised him up.—2. We infer, that this religion must be of the last consequence to every man; since God would never send his Son but on an errand worthy of Him who sends, and worthy of the dignity of the Messenger.—3. Then the threatenings are true; he that believeth not shall perish; then the promises are true; whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life.

AUGUST 23.

Scripture selected for the day .- 2 Corinthians, viii.

Among those who have closely and candidly examined the Holy Scriptures as a Divine Revelation, few persons are now to be found, who do not acknowledge their Divine origin to be unquestionable. That there are difficulties in the scriptures, every one admits; but these difficulties are founded, considerably, on the circumstances of those to whom the

examining the records of eternity; an atom endowed with intelligence, exploring the works of an Architect possessed of infinite resources. That there are mysteries in Divine revelation, is also admitted: but they are found where mystery was to be expected: they are found when we approach Him who dwells in

light which is inaccessible.

The whole body of scripture evidently labours to exalt Jesus Christ. In those places where his manhood is spoken of, the sacred writers carefully assert his Eternal Power and Godhead: the words before us form one example; the apostle in his letter to the Philippians declares, that though Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, yet he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Isaiah says, Unto us a child is born; but he adds, And his name shall be called the Mighty God. But who shall describe the riches, the glories of him who possesses essential Deity, who receives the worship of heaven, who is the Creator of all things, who upholds all things by the word of his power, and who will be the final Judge of all? Yet, wonderful truth! for our sakes, for worms, for sinners, he becomes poor! But what an humiliation was this! He becomes an infant of days! And though he takes not on him a sinful form, yet he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh; he was made subject to the misery which sin had introduced into the world, yea, to sinners themselves; he was identified as the Substitute of sinners, and treated as though he concentrated in himself the accumulated crimes of the generations past and to come. All possible infamy was heaped upon him in his death; and he was wounded, bruised, and put to death, in the midst of unmingled horrors.

By this act, this wonderful, this astonishing act,

[&]quot;Hell howl'd; and heav'n that hour let fall a tear;
Heav'n wept, that men might smile! heav'n bled, that men
Might never die!"

we become rich, though in ourselves we are "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." For, is he not comparatively rich, who, having been doomed to everlasting confinement, is made free? Is he not rich, who has all present things? Is he not rich, who is to be made in moral excellence like unto God? Is not he rich, who is heir of God, and has eternal life in prospect?

A Christian knows the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; for, in the pardon of his sin, in his conversion, sanctification, and hope of eternal life, he has tasted that the Lord is gracious. But shall not this knowledge, that Christ was infinitely generous, make us so in our measure? And what he has given to us out of his own fulness, shall we not share with crea-

tures perishing like ourselves?

AUGUST 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xc.

Although there is now a general admission, that the gospel must be true, yet the commanding influence of its truths seems to be awfully lessened in the minds of some, through the remains of the poison of scepticism still slowly operating. In foreign settlements these baneful effects are strengthened by the want of the means of religious instruction, by the constant presence of other rites, and of millions who acknowledge not the gospel. At home, the churches seen in almost every neighbourhood, the presence of the ministers of religion, and of pious men, added to the amazing efforts making to spread the truths of revelation, form an overwhelming force irresistibly carrying the mind into the concerns of another world.

Should, however, these peculiar circumstances, or the fascination of present things, a fascination common to all countries, have caused the peculiar doctrines of the gospel to have lost much of their force on our minds; still the apostle, in this chapter, points out two facts which cannot help arresting the attention: - "the things which are seen are temporal; the things which are not seen are eternal." If this proposition be undeniable, how incorrect is that excessive attachment which men feel towards present objects! - 2. How awfully will they be disappointed, whose whole cares are employed only on present things! - 3. How absolutely necessary is it that we should prepare to part with what is so transient, and to make sure of that happiness which is eternal!-4. The misery of a future state is infinitely terrible, and the time given us to avoid it is very short and uncertain. - 5. The joys of heaven are infinitely glorious, and the time to secure them is the present,-"now;" beyond which all is uncertainty. Let no one deceive himself here: without a true conversion, which must be produced by the impression of invisible objects, without a share in the merits of Christ, without a preparation for a state of perfect holiness, this heaven, this eternal state of happiness, will be lost.

If not prepared, if not converted, if not found in Christ, how unwelcome this truth,—"The things which are not seen, are eternal!" Thon child of a day, thou child of eternity, what dost thou resolve upon? Wilt thou still neglect a certain, a permanent, the only permanent good, for vain and deceitful enchantments, even when the mistake ends not in the deception which death detects, but remains for ever the

subject of unavailing inconceivable sorrow?

AUGUST 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Thessalonians, ii.

No disunion can be so fatal to one party as that between God and man: it is the want of union

between the protector and the protected, the sustainer and the sustained, the guardian and the orphan, between infinite power and weakness itself. But no rebellion can be so unjustifiable and detestable as our transgression of the Divine law; for, it is rebellion against our Father, our Benefactor, our adorable Sovereign, and our best, our only Friend. That such a rebellion exists, we need no logical proof, no long deduction of argument, to evince. It is seen in the state of the heart, in our dislike to religion, to prayer, to the Divine word and worship, to the people of God, and to all in which any thing of God is seen; as well as in ten thousand thousand overt acts of treason, and direct violations of the express injunctions of the law.

In these circumstances, (wonder, O heavens!) the Creator himself provides for, and solicits, a reconciliation. But how shall sinners be put among the children, when angels have been utterly rejected? Can they atone for sin, fulfil the law, and make themselves holy? Nothing of this is within their power. What then is to be done, that the gracious purposes of mercy in the heart of God may be accomplished? He appoints his Son to the work of redemption, and lays

help upon One who "is mighty to save."

Thus the whole work whereby sinners may be reconciled to God being finished, ministers are sent into the world as the ambassadors of Christ, to pray and beseech men to be reconciled to God. Ambassadors meet to decide upon the terms of peace; but a power must be humbled indeed before it will beg for peace, and intreat for a reconciliation. O the wonderful pity and condescension of God! The glorious and eternal Majesty of heaven beseeching men to be reconciled! Is there any thing like this in any record that has ever met our ears, in any idea which has ever presented itself to our minds? How shall we account for such a representation as this,—"as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you to be reconciled?" The enmity and rebellion of men are

utterly inexcusable; the quarrel originated with man, and is carried on only by man; the Sovereign himself is made "to serve with their sins." We know of no other way of accounting for these lengths of condescension, this apparent sacrifice of dignity in God, than that he knows that the soul is beyond all price precious, and its loss irreparable; he foresees the storm; his eyes penetrate those doleful regions, and the sufferings of lost spirits are thoroughly known to him. Through his ministers, therefore, by the impossibility of their atoning for their own sins, by the unreasonableness of the rebellion, by the tender mercies of God, by the all-sufficient merits of Christ, by the promised help of the Holy Spirit, and by the direful consequences of their continuance in rebellion, he intreats sinners to be reconciled.

AUGUST 26.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xi. 13—40.

The preceding account forms a fine history of Old Testament believers; and appears to be a disclosure of the secret springs of all their serious actions. They were men under the influence of a faith which deeply affected them, which was the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." They believed in various promises, the good contained in which they did not live to see, it was afar off; but their faith gave it an identity, a substance, in their minds. They embraced these promises in the fondest manner; and became so indifferent to all present good, that they were willing to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

But every Christian is a stranger and pilgrim, according to the language of the apostle, I Peter, ii. II. A common pilgrim among the Hindoos leaves

his family, embraces a life of dependence upon public alms, and departs to a place, the reaching of which promises to make amends for the loss of whatever he may have renounced. A true Christian acts, in substance, on this plan; -1. He gives up all injurious friendship with the world, and becomes a stranger to it so far as it would impede him in his christian pilgrimage. He cultivates the temper of a stranger, -a happy indifference to those things not connected with his duty; his conversation relates to other objects; like the apostle, he is "crucified to the world;" he "dies daily." - 2. Though employed in temporal concerns, he depends on God, and receives his daily supplies as from him. — 3. He is on a journey to a better country; and he manifests such a preference of God to all inferior objects, that God is not ashamed to be called his God, Hebrews, xi. 16, This passage shows how much pleased God is with what may be called the spirit or temper of a christian pilgrim in seeking a better country.

What a blessed state is this! How free from care and from the dangers which beset those who still linger in the world! How well prepared to put off this tabernacle! How delightful the prospects of the

Canaan which they love!

AUGUST 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ezekiel, xxxvii. 1—14.

The affecting description contained in the first verses of this chapter relates to the desolate state of Israel in their captivity. The Lord asks the prophet, Can these dry bones live? The prophet refers the answer to the Almighty; and well he may: he alone can tell. So says a pious mother respecting an ungodly son; — O Lord, thou only knowest! I have

prayed long; waited long for some sign of repentance; but I am almost ready to despair: thou alone knowest whether this child can live, shall live or not.

The doctrine here held forth, is, that the condition of men as sinners is most loathsome.—"We are altogether as an unclean thing;" as far as human exertion can go, it is an utterly hopeless case:—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Who can breathe life into the dead? Who can cause dry bones to live? It is the work of God,—a work of grace,—a marvellous work, when sinners are quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

What a case for pity is here! Dead, and the bones become dry! Let us pity men in such a woeful condition. Are they thy children, thy parents, thy brethren or sisters, or other relations? Are they thy servants or thy neighbours; or, are they even heathens? — Wilt thou not pity them? Thou wouldest pity their bodies if thus so far reduced to their original dust; and wilt thou not pity and pray for souls in such a condition, souls which must be lost, unless God pity them, unless he exert his almighty power in their behalf, and save them. Lord, do thou pity, do thou save; for, vain is the help of man.

"Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise,
To torrents melt my streaming eyes;
And thou, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which thou caust not heal.

My God, I feel the mournful scene; My bowels yearn o'er dying men; And fain my pity would reclaim, And snatch the fire-brands from the flame.

But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thine own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy,"

nesses to the Almighty and well be may; he alone on the man and the gave of plans muthors respecting and the collection of the collection

AUGUST 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—Proverbs, xxvi.

Sloth in any concern generally leads to failure, if not to poverty; in religion, it is fatal to the soul. The slothful sometimes plead the difficulties in the Bible, the variety of sects and clashing opinions, as perfectly justifying them in letting things take their chance. How exactly Solomon has described this case; -"The way of the slothful is a hedge of thorns!" Others plead the difficulty of conversion, of becoming like a little child, of leaving all for Christ, of entering the narrow gate. This case Solomon thus describes; -"The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." The duties of religion are so hard and difficult, say others, that we are sure we should never be able to pursue a religious profession, to deny ourselves, to forgive and love our enemies, to come out from the world, to mortify the deeds of the body, to watch unto prayer, to run, to fight; all these things, they pretend, are too hard; — "I pray thee have me excused." Thus, as Solomon further says, - "The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour." Many plead their circumstances, that they are surrounded with powerful friends, who would all forsake them; and that they should have other obstacles impossible to be overcome: - "There is a lion in the way." Others plead, that they are so addicted to certain habits, and feel such fascinations, or they have so many cares and perplexities, that they must put off these concerns, however important, till a more convenient opportunity arrive.

The dangerous consequences of indulging this sloth will appear, if we consider, that it is utterly contrary to the appointed means for acquiring salvation: it is highly provoking to the Redeemer, who, at an infinite expense, procured salvation for us.—"Bind him hand

and foot, and cast him into outer darkness." It is as fatal to the soul, when persevered in, as profligacy of manners.—" How shall we escape, if we (only) neg-

lect so great salvation!"

In reply to the objections of the slothful, it is enough to say, That whatever difficulties there may be in a religious life, these have all been overcome by thousands;—all needful grace is promised;—success is certain, if we truly seek:—"Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened. Every one that seeketh findeth." Let us consider the prize set before us: Paul knew something of its value: he says, "I forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those which are before, stretching towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Consider the ruin which will come upon the slothful.

AUGUST 29.

the mention at a blice of more trackle one was true on that

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, xlii.

One gracious design of the Almighty in his afflictive dispensations, is, to lead man to the knowledge of God, and to abhor himself:- "Now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."-1. Views of infinite power and majesty may well humble us who are worms formed from the dust, and whose life is even as the vapour. -2. But views of the Divine purity must fill the mind of a transgressor with the utmost apprehensions. See how Isaiah was affected, when he heard in vision the seraphim crying one to another,-" Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts,-the whole earth is full of his glory. Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."-3. Meditation

on the Divine goodness, contrasted with our own unworthiness and ingratitude, may, under a Divine blessing, serve to humble us, and to lay us low in selfabasement: we have made a Being infinitely good "serve with our sins." But when we behold this goodness manifested in the gift and sufferings of his Son, how should we abhor ourselves, as the guilty cause of such a sacrifice! Who can behold Jesus, the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, nailed to the tree; and not execrate sin, and not abhor himself? If we would cultivate proper thoughts of ourselves, we must go to Calvary; hear the groans of the dying Jesus: see what sin is doing there.—"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent as in dust and ashes."—4. Reflections on the omniscience of God are calculated to make us loathe ourselves: he has seen all mine anger, envy, impurity, and vain thoughts, all my secret corruption .- 5. A view of God in his law convinced the Apostle Paul of sin, and destroyed all his high thoughts of himself .- 6. A view of the Divine justice, especially in its dreadful operations on the ungodly, may well humble the person who hopes that the mercy of God has rescued him from punishments which he justly deserved.

We must remember, however, that those views of God which humble the mind, must be under the influence of the blessed Spirit. Mere knowledge puffeth up, but when our meditations and reflections on these subjects are sanctified, we shall surely feel as

Job did: we shall abhor ourselves.

AUGUST 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, i. 1—24.

Supposing the apostle to have chosen this for a text,—"We preach Christ crucified," and to be

preaching in the synagogue at Corinth, with Aquila and Priscilla by his side, would he not address those around him in words to this purport: - My brethren, what is our wish concerning you? Is it not that you may be saved? We are aware that you are under the sentence of condemnation, and we ask ourselves, What will these our hearers do when they fall into the hands of the living God? What will they do in the swellings of Jordan? What will they do when the heavens shall be wrapped up as a scroll, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up?" To meet all these subjects of dread, "we preach Christ crucified." Are any of you, under the terrors of a guilty conscience, sinking deeper and deeper in guilt and despair, and asking,-" Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" To you we preach Christ crucified: come to the cross of Christ, and you shall find joy and peace in believing. Are there some among you going about to establish your own righteousness, anxiously seeking peace in the rites of Moses, and in the traditions of the elders, and yet terrified by the claims of the law, and the fears of death? To you also we preach Christ crucified,-"for he is the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And were I to visit any one of you on his dying bed, I should say, Friend, you are on the borders of eternity; you are full of anxiety: you are afraid to die; you wish to live, that you may prepare for eternity; to you I preach Christ crucified as the Balm for a guilty conscience, as the Antidote of death, and as the Resurrection and the Life. In short, brethren, whether I wish to encourage the young, or strengthen the weak; to comfort those that mourn, or to satisfy the doubts of the perplexed; whether I wish to urge to all holy obedience, or to cheer the afflicted or the dying, I preach Christ crucified. If I preach to heathers, this is my subject: and I find it to be the power of God and the wisdom of God both to Jews, who desire a sign, and to

Greeks, who seek after wisdom. This doctrine reforms the licentious, succours the tempted, awakens the careless, brings peace to the soul in trouble, and animates the christian warrior to conquest and a crown. This is the foundation, the solid rock, on which I build all mine own hopes for eternity. Christ is my Strength in weakness, my Joy in sorrow, my Courage in danger, my Refuge against despair, my Life in death. To this I bend all the powers and energies of my soul,—even that I may "win Christ, and be found in him,"

AUGUST 31.

Scripture selected for the day .- 1 Kings, viii. 1-12.

All true believers have been united in loving the place where they have held communion with God. Immediately after the flood, Noah built an altar to the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings on it. After the Almighty had appeared unto Abraham, in the plain of Mamre, "there builded he an altar unto the Lord. who appeared unto him, and there he called on the name of the Lord." The Almighty appeared to Isaac in Beersheba; and Isaac there builded an altar, and called on the name of the Lord. When Jacob was indulged with a vision, he called the name of the place "Bethel." that is, the house of God. When Joshua, through the prayers of Moses, had discomfited Amalek, Moses built an altar, and called the name of it, "Jehovahnissi," that is, The Lord is my Banner. David, having obtained rest from all his enemies, wished to build a house for Jehovah; but this work was reserved for Solomon. The Psalms contain many strong expressions of David's attachment to the house of God. The Jews, when they prayed, turned their faces towards Jerusalem and the temple: Jonah says, "I will look again towards thy holy temple." Our Saviour went every sabbath to the synagogues, or to the temple:

and the first Christians met in the synagogues, and turned their own premises into houses for God.

What may we suppose to be the cause among true believers of this attachment to the house of God? 1. They love the place appointed for worship, be it where or what it will; because Christ has promised to meet his people there. David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that he might "behold the beauty of the Lord."—2. It is the place where they meet with regular instruction, comfort, reproof, and establishment in righteousness. - 3. Here they hope their children and friends may be made wise unto salvation. — 4. It is the centre of union to those who love God, and where sacred times and ordinances are preserved, prayer offered, and plans formed for the extension of the Divine kingdom, -5. Here they have often been refreshed, and stimulated to obedience; and here they hope they are training up for the kingdom of heaven.

Let us be careful that our attachment to the house of God be not a carnal one; but that we love it because we can say with Jacob, Verily God is in this place.

SEPTEMBER 1.

Scripture selected for the day .- 1 Corinthians, xiii.

The human mind requires a principle to impel it forward, and to draw forth its powers of exertion. The world supplies to the unconverted, in the objects they pursue, an impelling principle: in one man it is the love of gain; in another the love of applause, and in another the love of sensual indulgence.

Religion supplies a principle far nobler than these; and, were it not for the counteracting force of depravity, with one far more efficacious: this is, the love of Christ. We have a most pathetic display of the force of this principle in the case of Mary Magdalene,