

In the covenant of redemption provision is made for the deliverance of all who believe, from a state both of sin and of backsliding: but no man obtains this deliverance till he be convinced of its being a horrible pit; and till he cry for deliverance,—“Lord, save, or I perish.” There is no safety for a Christian but what is derived from faith in God,—in his promises, in his grace, in his faithfulness, and in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. “They that trust in the Lord,” says David, “shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” Exactly adhering to the same allusion, the Prophet Isaiah, and the Apostle Peter, quoting him, say,—“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

The person delivered shows forth his gratitude, not by his lips merely, but in substantial acts of persevering obedience: he dreads the pit, and all the avenues which lead to it; and he never considers himself safe but as he feels his footing firm on the rock, nor happy but as he dwells under its shadow as the shadow of the Almighty.

Such deliverances, such conversions, excite fear in others; who suspect that they cannot be safe, while such a person has been found in such sinful courses, such a horrible pit. From the memorable instances of Divine goodness, others are encouraged to trust in the Lord for ever.

OCTOBER 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, i.

Every person pronounces that man wretched, who is without a friend, without a protector, and without a home. But let all human misery meet in one person, and compare his circumstances with those

of the man who is without Christ; he is still an object of envy.

When we speak of Christ as being a desirable Object, we must always keep in mind the spiritual state of man; for it is in reference to this state that he was made flesh. — 1. Christ is a *Surety*; mankind are bound to keep the law perfectly; and, upon failure, are under the curse. How miserable then is the man who has broken this law, lies under this tremendous curse, and has none to obey and none to suffer in his stead! — 2. Christ is a *Refuge*: how truly deplorable is the condition of the person who is pursued by Divine Justice, tormented by a guilty conscience, upon the brink of death, and yet has no refuge to fly to, no resource! — 3. Christ is a *Prophet*: till taught by the Lord Jesus, men are full of error, and perishing for lack of knowledge: he only can make wise to salvation. — 4. Christ is the *Deliverer*: men are the captives of sin and the world, the slaves of Satan; these enemies are dragging them down to perdition, and there is no deliverer, mighty to save, while they are without Christ. — 5. Christ is the *Consolation of Israel*: in a world like this, what multitudes are sinking under an accumulation of sorrow! The world frowns, the conscience is full of trouble, and no friend applies a healing balm to the broken heart. — 6. Christ is the *Great Physician*: the mind labours under a fatal distemper, which increases every day: no restorative sufficiently efficacious is found; all means are tried, but the disorder reigns even unto death, and the man perishes because he is far from the Saviour. — 7. Christ is the *Resurrection and the Life*: nothing affects us so much as the thoughts of dissolution; if sin be unpardoned, all the bitterness of death is felt. How truly deplorable, then, the case of those who are without Christ!

But who are they to whom this description applies, — “Without Christ?” They who have never sought him; they who have never loved him. No individual was ever able to say, The Redeemer is mine, without

esteeming him a Treasure above all price, the unspeakable Gift. They are without Christ, who have never given themselves up to him. O miserable man! You are perishing, and there is none to save you; you are dying, and there is none to take away the sting of death; you are going to appear before God, and no Saviour is there, to intercede for you, though he ever lives to make intercession for all who come to him; and you perish, notwithstanding so efficacious a remedy has been all your days within your reach.

What a treasure has the sincere Christian in the Lord Jesus Christ! A Friend, who is Wisdom to him in ignorance, a Physician in sickness, Defence in danger, Joy in sorrow, Riches in poverty, Strength in weakness, Life in death!

OCTOBER 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, iv.

There is no more access to God for an impenitent man, than there is for a man to Vesuvius, when it pours down streams of burning lava:—"Our God is a consuming fire." The flaming cherubim are placed every way, to guard the way of access to the tree of life. The sinner who falls unreconciled into the hands of the living God, is devoured by the Divine vengeance. Approach to God, except through a Mediation, is forbidden by the Divine law, by the truth, purity, and justice of God; and by the ceremonial law too:—"Into the second tabernacle went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people."

But what obligations we are under to Christ for his

interposition! How changed is the scene from what it was when the Jews said, amidst the thunders, and lightning, and earthquake,—“Let not God speak to us, lest we die!” Now we can come boldly to the throne, for it is a throne of grace. The Almighty has not left his throne; he has not given up his authority, but it has, through the sacrifice of Christ, become a throne of grace, a throne from which favours are dispensed to the guilty; and we are invited to come that we may find all needful grace. Many are our times of need in such a changing state as this: times of temptation, and of affliction; times when* called upon to discharge painful and arduous duties; a time of death. How important a privilege, then, is prayer; and to be permitted to go to our heavenly Father at all times and in all cases of need; to him who is near to all that call upon him! Whither shall a heavy-laden sinner go,—whither a man chased by the fiercest enemies,—a man full of distempers which no mortal skill can cure,—an afflicted man,—a dying man?—Whither but to a God propitious through a Mediator.

We may come with confidence; for, our heavenly Father is ever ready to hear. Christ is gone into the holiest of all, with his own blood, and ever liveth to make intercession; we have exceedingly great and precious promises to plead; God is faithful to his promises, and the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities.

How miserable that man who has no refuge in God, neither in the hour of temptation, nor in affliction, nor in death! Desolate creature! Thou seelest the vanity of the creature; thy heart and flesh will soon fail, but thou hast no support from the everlasting arms,—from that God

“Who bears the earth’s huge pillars up.”

OCTOBER 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Leviticus, xxvi.

The histories of the relapses of good men into sin may not improperly be considered as so many guide-posts pointing to the narrow road, and bearing this inscription;—"That is the way; walk ye in it." God never fails to punish his people for disobedience; and he often punishes them either through their sin, or reminds them of their sin in their punishment. Joseph's brethren fully expected by their sin to rid themselves of the dreamer; but the steps they took to prevent the fulfilment of his dreams actually brought them to bow at the feet of their brother. The Jews permitted the Canaanites to remain in the land; and these Canaanites led them back to idolatry, and laid the foundation of their succeeding captivities and other calamities. Eli neglected to reform his sons: the priesthood was taken from his family, thirty-thousand Israelites were slain, his sons were killed, and the old man himself fell from his seat, and died. Jonah neglected to fulfil the Divine command; but God spake in the tempest which followed him,—"If thou walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to thee," and he was thrown into the ocean, and compelled, after all, to execute the Divine commission.

But let us bring the subject home to ourselves; we are called sometimes to be near those who are irreligious; and our duty calls us to honour the Divine Being before men; we are afraid or ashamed to avow our serious opinions; and therefore the Almighty leaves us to sin, as he did Peter; and, instead of keeping the esteem of men, we lose it. We are sometimes remiss in family duty; and our heavenly Father permits dissension and a worldly spirit to enter among us. Or, we neglect to seek the salvation of our children; and they promise to bring our grey heirs with sorrow to the grave. We idolize our

children; they are visited with death. We neglect closet religion, or the house of God; barrenness of mind succeeds, and we cry, — "O that it were with me as in months past." We form improper connexions; these become thorns in our side; they keep us back in religion, and they spoil our character by tinging every thing we do with their particular vices. We give ourselves up to worldly cares; these cares become our torment, and our schemes are blasted. Pleasure has drawn us aside; the Divine Being afflicts us, and we search in vain for our roll of assurance; we tremble at the idea of death. Something becomes duty, but it is unpleasant, or we fear we shall lose our friends if we do it; we do it not; we are left friendless. We discharge a difficult duty; the Lord makes our very enemies to be at peace with us.

It is impossible to enter into all the cases of this nature, which occur in the life of a Christian. But let us listen to the whispers of conscience; let us inquire into the probable causes of such and such afflictions, and see if the words which have led to these meditations will not unravel them.

What a folly is it to expect happiness without his smiles who is so essential to the system to which we belong; rather, under his frowns who has so many means of annoying us, in mind and body, and in our connexions and circumstances!

OCTOBER 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—2 Thessalonians, i.

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is an event so solemn, and accompanied with circumstances so tremendous, that few Christians can look at it without dismay,—material things on fire; the sun darkened; the heavens wrapped up as a scroll;

the dead rising, and the wicked calling to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. What events are these! Yet there are different scenes to be exhibited in that day, scenes which are suited to call forth sensations of the liveliest joy; among the rest,—“Christ will come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe;” our Lord Jesus Christ will be the Object admired, as his character is displayed in the persons and history of believers.

Every Christian is a monument of mercy now, and many are a wonder to others. Christians can read the lives of Paul, Bunyan, Colonel Gardiner, Newton, and others, without admiring the grace of God in them. We wonder at the dealings of Divine Providence with some, at the extraordinary circumstances in the conversion of others, at the grace of God shining in the characters of others. But, at the second coming of Christ, all these subjects of admiration will receive an amazing accession of importance from the scenes then opening on the astonished world. How will Christ then be admired in his saints; when the providential circumstances through which the church has passed, and new circumstances which will then shine out of the obscurity in which they were necessarily involved, will be explained from the lips of the Judge! Then the wonders of converting and preserving grace; then the prodigies of valour, the works of faith, the patience of hope, and the labours of love, of all the saints, will be brought to light, to the honour of the Saviour; and then they, made like their glorious Head, will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

This is the doctrine of scripture in many places: Paul says, that in him Christ “showed forth all long-suffering;” that believers are “to be to the praise of the glory of his grace,” that they “are to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.” God himself

says,—“This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise.” Paul again speaks of the riches of the inheritance of Christ in his saints: and the church is said to be the “fulness of Him who filleth all in all.”

Christ will be admired in every individual believer, and in the church as a body, just as we admire a benevolent institution, when we see the collected objects of its charity rising up to virtue and usefulness in the world; or as we admire a successful physician, when we behold the proofs of his skill in the objects whom he has restored to health and happiness; or as we should have admired the Saviour in the happy recipients of his goodness, if we had seen the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf listening, and the dead walking and conversing.

As all the holy angels will come with Christ on this occasion, we may suppose that they will be those who admire him in the characters, and history, and blessedness, of believers.

OCTOBER 5.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ezekiel, xviii.
19—32.

From the words of the prophet in this place, we are to understand, that the way of the wicked, and the thoughts of the self-righteous, are to be forsaken. The way of the wicked is called *his* way, though some would charge the sins of man upon God. It is the way which man chooses, notwithstanding all the Divine inhibitions; it is the way to which the Almighty never inclined him, never tempted him, but which he will enable him to forsake, if help be sought. Sin, then, must be laid at man's door: it is *his* way. But it must be forsaken, forsaken with sorrow, with abhorrence, with the whole heart.

Every one knows that the way of open sin, the broad road, leads to ruin. But there is a more decent way, the way of the self-righteous: this sinner walks in the way of pride and self-confidence; his actions are decent; he has nothing very aggravated to forsake; but his thoughts and feelings are utterly wrong: he imagines that a close attention to the forms of religion is sufficient, and that we may be saved by our own works. Now these thoughts must be forsaken with self-abhorrence, and with a decision of mind as genuine as is manifested by the more notorious offender when he turns to God.

In his word, by his providences, and by his servants, the Almighty calls upon man to return, and promises mercy to him. He will have mercy upon him, because he delights in mercy, because Christ has opened the door of mercy, and the Father has promised to admit all who apply in the name of the Son. But, should any one draw conclusions against himself, as though his sins were too aggravated to be forgiven, too numerous to be blotted out; let such a one remember, that "our God will abundantly pardon," or, as it is in the margin, "he will multiply to pardon," or he will pardon "according to the multitude of his tender mercies." What a wonderful thing this is, that Jehovah should go such lengths to meet the desponding feelings of the penitent! Let it, however, be kept in mind, that if we forsake not sin, and return not, there is no mercy for us; and that the Lord grants the remission of sins only to the penitent.

OCTOBER 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, i.
22—31.

The whole of our salvation is of Christ, from first to last; from the first promise to the moment when Christ said on the cross,—“It is finished;” and from

the first impressions on the mind, to the period when the spirit shakes off a body of sin and death.

We are by nature foolish, ignorant, and full of the most pernicious and fatal errors. We pity the heathen, while we ourselves perhaps are so stupid as to prefer the world to God, the interests of time to the glories of eternity. We know not our state as fallen sinners, nor our danger as condemned already. In these circumstances Christ becomes Wisdom to us, that is, he affords inward as well as outward teaching; he teaches the heart, and makes wise to salvation. All the wisdom and gifts in the church come from the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are criminals in the sight of God; and the curses of the law are out against us. From this condemnation, Christ delivers us by becoming our Righteousness:—"we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," and he puts upon us the robe of his own perfect obedience to the law, so that we are complete in him: thus "he is made" unto us Righteousness.

But how shall we be capable of enjoying that happiness which consists in the perfection of holiness? Christ is made our Sanctification; he sanctifies us by uniting us to himself, by his holy word, by his ordinances, and by the influence of his blessed Spirit.

Our interest in all these rich and eternal blessings depends upon our being in Christ:—"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." By being "in Christ" we understand the apostle to mean, that such a person is in the state of a man who is exempted from military duty, by the services of his substitute. God has provided a Substitute,—"I have found a ransom," and we are saved from or exempted from wrath through him. This exemption is enjoyed by all who believe, and by those only. It is therefore the man who has faith, who shall escape eternal ruin. It is to the believer that Christ is Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption; in this way we are complete in him.

OCTOBER 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, x.

Those who were truly pious among the Jews, did not rest in outward ceremonies. The Psalmist says,—"The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit."

The distress of David, when he penned the fifty-first Psalm, is well known: he was overwhelmed with the anguish of a wounded spirit. To him in these circumstances nothing appeared so desirable, so necessary, as a hope of the Divine mercy; and nothing so dreadful as the wrath of God. To obtain this mercy, and to avert this wrath, he would have given a world. What shall I do? as though he had said,—'Thou desirest not sacrifice, otherwise I would give it, and thousands of victims should bleed on thy altar.'

While a person remains unawakened respecting his state before God, and is satisfied with temporal good, he is a stranger to this anxiety; nay, he frequently makes a sport of these exercises of mind as a species of fanaticism, if not a real approach to insanity; as though it were unreasonable to form a correct idea of the evil of our conduct, and to tremble at the threatenings which denounce Divine wrath.

But let this person be brought to know the extent of the Divine law, let his heart and mind be examined by this new perception on this subject, and let his fears be awakened by discoveries of the terrible consequences of falling, without a Mediator, into the hands of the living God; finally, let the piercing sense which he has of these things be sharpened by the approach of death; then what would he not give for the least glimmering of hope in the mercy of God, and in the merits of Christ?—"A wounded spirit who can bear?"

Still all the awakened sinner can bring is a broken heart; and the only possible way in which he can obtain grace, is by an entire dependance upon the sacrifice of Christ.

OCTOBER 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, xiv.

It has been matter of doubt with some, on the supposition that there is no after-state, whether the tranquillity of the grave be not more desirable than life with all its vicissitudes, sorrows, and cares. But, when the fear of an after-reckoning comes, then death appears armed with terror.

Death is indeed a positive evil, and to an unconverted man a proper subject of terror. It is a part of the curse,—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Yet the state of the dead, dying in Christ, is blessed; as it includes an exemption from all temptation, sin, and all sorrow, and is connected with the purification of the body. Christ “shall change our vile bodies, and make them like unto his own glorious body.” “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.”

Still more blessed is the death of the righteous, as it respects the glorified spirit. What is heaven? It is enough to say of it, that it is a state in which the Christian becomes perfectly like the Redeemer, and dwells in an eternal nearness to him. It is a state in which provision is made for the full exercise of all those feelings of gratitude, joy, and love, which will sweetly and unceasingly flow from the human heart. Here God in our nature will be an Object filling the sight with everlasting pleasure, while the wisdom and grandeur shining in the works of creation, but more especially in the glorious work of Redemption, will be celebrated with rapture in the conferences and songs of the blessed for ever: in this work, and in whatever else the employments and pleasures of heaven shall consist, the human powers will meet with their full expansion and gratification.

It will, further, be the full enjoyment of perfect company, the communion of saints.

The body being perfected and re-united to the soul, the redeemed believer shall enjoy this state for ever and ever.

Such is the blessedness of those who die in Christ; but then this blessedness is entirely suspended on this one point, dying in the Lord, which includes a well-grounded hope of interest in his merits, and a state of meetness to enjoy him for ever. These qualifications are absolutely necessary to make death a blessing.

May I then be thus prepared; and, O blessed Jesus, notwithstanding my many grievous departures from thee, let "it be light at evening-tide," and be thou then to me the Antidote of death.

OCTOBER 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Genesis, xv.

When God offered this encouragement to Abraham, he was a wanderer in a strange land; and was childless; yet by a man of Abraham's faith, the avowal here made by the Almighty was, no doubt, considered as amply making up for every deprivation.

In our times, God is such a Shield to his people, that they scarcely see their enemies; and whenever they have been exposed to the malice of the wicked, the history of their sufferings furnishes ample proof of the fulfilment of the promise,—“I am thy Shield.”

The latter part of this declaration to Abraham seems to import, that God makes himself over to his people as a Balance against all they can lose in seeking and serving him. Many expressions in the Divine word support this idea:—“Thou art my Portion, O Lord.” Although some incomprehensible good must be included in God's thus giving himself to his people, a good only to be known as he is pleased to

unfold it; yet we may venture to conjecture that it implies thus much,—Whatever a God can be to a creature constituted as thou art, that I will be to thee: I will impart to thee, as far as thy powers are capable of receiving it, something of my goodness, of mine own light or wisdom, of mine own purity, of mine own ineffable blessedness; and these supplies shall never be cut off. Can a sinner desire more than to have unobstructed access to the Fountain of eternal mercy? Can a worm desire more than union to infinite dignity and glory? Can a particle of intelligence wish for more than to draw perpetually from the source of light? Can a dying creature conceive of a higher blessedness than to be united to essential life, to the eternal God?

It would have been the highest presumption to have formed such high expectations as these, considering our desert, if we had not been expressly invited thus to seek for union with God. Even now it behoves dust and ashes to utter these things with reverence; and, while we look with a trembling eye towards a state of such ineffable glory, to cover our faces with deep humility, and to stand, and wonder, adore.

OCTOBER 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, cxxvi.

An ungodly man ascribes all his advancement in the world to his own enterprise, to lucky circumstances adroitly improved, to friends, and to something he calls Fortune. The Hindoos ascribe the success of their schemes to Lukshmee, the goddess of prosperity. But a good man says,—“The Lord has caused goodness and mercy to follow me all my days.”

The Almighty often does much for men relative to

this life : some he raises from deep poverty to the height of affluence ; others from a state of gross ignorance and obscurity to the highest rank in literary merit ; and others from long continued and almost incurable disease to perfect health. But the Christian, being made alive to his eternal interests, feels the deepest and most profound gratitude respecting spiritual favours. He looks back and meditates on those thoughts of compassion and plans of mercy which, before all time, occupied the Divine mind. He beholds with wonder a holy God causing to meet on Christ the iniquities of us all. He remembers with the most grateful feelings the Friend by whom he was called out of darkness, and drawn from the dark abyss into which he was about to fall. He traces the operations of preserving goodness through numberless trials. He rejoices in the stores of grace laid up in Christ, and perceives with joy the promises of eternal glory scattered up and down the Divine word. When the Christian looks over all this provision of infinite mercy, he is filled with a joy and gratitude which take captive all the powers of his soul ; a joy and gratitude, which, while they raise him, humble him in the dust, and constrain him to cry out,—‘ Why me, O merciful Lord, why was I made to hear thy voice, while others are permitted to go on in their obstinacy and perish ? Why were angels left, and men chosen ? Why was I, among so many criminals, made the monument of thy mercy ?’ But this gratitude excites to self-dedication, and to active exertions for the glory of God. Such a grateful believer says,—‘ The Lord has done great things for me ; what can I now do for him ? Where will my exertions be most helpful ? What servant of his shall I encourage ? What plan for his glory can I most subserve ?’

OCTOBER 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—Galatians, iii.

A man's sense of his duty can never extend beyond his knowledge, nor his uneasiness under failures or offences beyond his sense of duty. Many nominal Christians, having no spiritual knowledge of the law, consider mere honesty as a sufficient passport to heaven. Others add a little charity, or integrity; and some are not content without an occasional attention to the public services of religion. An easy course! Should conscience not be satisfied while the soul is thus dead to God, it is urged, that the Judge of all the earth is a merciful Being, who will not deal hardly with his creatures: if this be not enough to quell all fears, some general notions that Christ is a Saviour bring the man into a state of thorough peace. To these persons neither law nor gospel is any thing: millions of sins lie buried, exciting neither compunction nor alarm.

But, let the law of the Lord, like a candle introduced into a dark room, enter the heart; or, in other words, let these facts be known, that the law demands a perfect heart, and condemns for the slightest transgression; then the person's sins become visible, yea like sands on the sea shore innumerable, and stretching like mountains towards the skies. It is often the case, that a person in these circumstances endeavours to keep the law, and labours hard to live without sin. But he soon finds it impossible to attain perfection, though the law will be satisfied with nothing less; he therefore sinks down as a helpless captive; and, were not the way of help revealed, the way of fulfilling the law and suffering its penalty by our Divine Substitute, he would sink into despair. He now calls upon the Redeemer to save him: he mourns for sin, he believes the promises, he obeys the

commands, and by a new and living principle he devotes himself to God.

Hence it may be clearly seen, that without this knowledge of the law, a self-righteous man can never know his state, can never repent of sin, and of course can never believe in Christ.

OCTOBER 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Micah, vii.

No one can doubt that the Divine Being is possessed of unbounded benevolence. It was this attribute which disposed him to form this universe, composed of countless millions of dependent beings:—"the eyes of all wait on him, and he gives them their meat in due season."

But how shall God's tender mercies be extended towards offenders, seeing his government is infinitely opposed to sin; seeing the most solemn declarations have been made, that the Almighty will not clear the guilty; seeing that not merely acts of treason stand in the way of the exercise of mercy, but the sinner himself is in actual rebellion? These are the mountains which obstruct the course of the river of mercy. If any means can be discovered by the application of which the honours of the Divine Government shall be preserved; if the threatenings and curses of the law can be fairly satisfied; and if the rebel's heart can be changed, so that he shall love the moral government of God; then his salvation will bring glory to Jehovah, and a safe and honourable way will be opened for the streams of mercy to visit and refresh the heart. All obstacles have been removed by Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled and magnified the law, and through the Holy Spirit restores the sinner to the Divine image.

That God delights in mercy, is seen in that he

pardons numerous sins:—"Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." The most aggravated sins:—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage: thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." "How many monuments does the church contain, carrying down to all ages this glorious truth,—"God is rich in mercy!"

But how may I know that I am a partaker of his saving mercy? Do I feel the burden of my sins, and the need of this mercy? Am I found in my closet, daily seeking it? Do I trust in the Redeemer through whom it is bestowed? None that are penitent need despair; seeing God is rich in mercy, Christ is rich in merit, and the scriptures are rich in their invitations.

OCTOBER 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, ix.

The Psalmist says, and the same words are quoted and confirmed by the Apostle Paul, that among the whole race of men, "there is none that doeth good, no not one." But it may then be asked, Are all those splendid actions by which national calamities have been mitigated;—hospitals, and charity schools, and alms-houses erected;—human lives preserved;—and countries been civilized or made free;—are all these actions to be placed among the vices of mankind? Are the distinguished examples of Paul, of Howard, of Washington, of Clarkson, of Wilberforce, to lose all their effect upon mankind?

This is not the meaning of the Divine oracles: all

these actions are comparatively good; and, as far as human cognisance goes, they may be pronounced good. But that which may be very estimable in the sight of men, may lose all its claims to holiness, when brought before God:—"He charges his angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight: how much more filthy and abominable is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!"

It is plain, then, that by the highest human merit no man can be just or justified in the sight of God. But this appears more clearly established, when we consider,—that the nature of man is radically sinful, polluting, according to the Divine judgment, all he does;—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"—that God, the Judge, is infinitely pure, and knows and sees all things; and that the Divine law extends to the very root and springs of action. But, if we are not just, then we must be unrighteous, and as such must be in a state of condemnation; for, "the soul that sinneth shall die."

Is there, then, no other way of becoming just before God? Yes, "Christ is the End of the law for righteousness;" and he who believes in the name of this Substitute is pronounced just, or is "justified from all things." "I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law," that is, faith makes that our's which Christ did as a Substitute for us. Hence Paul's desire to be found in him; hence we are said to have redemption through his blood; to have peace with God by faith.

"That dear Lord from heav'n descended,
Sinners to redeem like me:
Whosoe'er hath faith to trust him,
That's the man that can get free."

May I, then, see to it, that I understand thoroughly the great subject of justification, or acceptance with God; that I stumble not against the Foundation which God himself has laid in Sion, but build all my hopes for eternity upon it; that I be a possessor of this faith, which the apostle calls "precious faith." May Christ dwell in my heart by faith, and may I fight the good fight of faith, and at length lay hold upon eternal life.

OCTOBER 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, cxiii.

Names, as applied to the Almighty, are given in condescension to our weakness, that on so profound and important a subject as that of the Divine existence and nature, we might have some ideas imparted to us. For, what sounds can convey adequate ideas of infinite power, glory, purity, justice, and grace?

Let us then meditate on the names given to the Almighty in scripture, that we may learn to praise this condescending God, and put our trust in him.

Among the names applied to the Father, are, the *Almighty*; by which we are encouraged to confide in him, as always able to save us, and to disappoint our enemies;—the *Eternal*; to remind us, that he is underived and unchangeable, that, if he is our God, he will be so for ever and ever;—the *Rock*; to show that we may build our hopes upon him without fear, and sit under his shadow, and find refreshment;—the *Refuge*; that the weakest may fly unto him in every danger, and find complete security;—our *Father*; that we may look up to him as such, and expect to meet in him all that pity, assistance, consolation, protection, and instruction, which an infinite Being, sustaining that character, can bestow.

The Holy Spirit is called, *The Comforter*; that we may be directed whither to go in times of sorrow;—the *Spirit of Wisdom*; that we may seek to be taught by him, and made wise to salvation;—the *Guide*; that we may give ourselves up to his holy influences, and go to him in every time of perplexity;—the *Spirit of Truth*; that we may be led to him for direction in reading the Divine word, and in searching into the nature of every part of Divine truth;—the *Sanctifier*; that we may give up our hearts to be purified by him, and our whole selves to be prepared for the regions of light and holiness.

Christ is called *Jesus*; that we may recognise him as the Saviour from sin;—*Christ*; that we may remember that the Holy Spirit was poured on him without measure to fit him for his important work;—*Immanuel*; to show us his true nature in one person, the God shining gracious through the man;—the *Prophet*; that we may come to him as our spiritual Guide and Teacher;—the *Priest*; that we may be led to follow him with the eye of faith into the holiest of all, into heaven itself, with his own blood, his own sacrificed body;—the *King*; that we may submit to his laws, and put the crown upon his head;—the *Captain*; that we may put ourselves under his command;—the *Passover*; that we may seek for security from the wrath to come by the sprinkling of his blood;—the *Mediator*, *Intercessor*, and *Advocate*; that we may come unto God by him, and be encouraged constantly to draw near with a true heart, and in the full assurance of faith;—the *Vine*; that we may seek constant union to him;—the *Door*; that we may enter into every privilege and duty through him;—the *Way*; that we may walk in him;—the *Shepherd*; that we may join his flock;—the *Foundation*; that we may build all our hopes upon him;—the *Corner-stone*; that we may make him the means of union with all the people of God. How precious are all these names! They are to be “praised from the rising to the setting sun;” to form the ground of our

support, to be pleaded in prayer, used in our christian course, and become the theme of our joy here and for ever.

OCTOBER 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, i.

It is matter of great regret, that our occupations, and the distraction of our minds, debar us so much from enjoying the pleasures of religious meditation. Peter, and especially Paul, received extraordinary illuminations respecting the mysteries of redemption; yet what they had attained seemed to open to them only heights and depths which passed knowledge.

From the little communicated to us respecting angels, it appears that they are full of benevolence; hence in almost every age they have been employed in carrying messages of good-will to men. They were frequently sent to the patriarchs; they announced the coming of Christ to the shepherds; they comforted him in his temptation, and in the garden; they were present at the resurrection and ascension; and now they watch the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom, they rejoice when only one sinner is brought to repentance, and they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation. In the covenant of redemption they find profound subjects which they long to comprehend. The expressions which the apostle uses in another place,—“Which things the angels desire to look into,”—intimate a very ardent and intense longing to pry into these mysteries. In the work of redemption more of God is made known than in any other of his works which have come to our knowledge; with this work also are connected the eternal destinies of men, a great portion of whom are to be the companions of angels for ever. The manifold wisdom of God shines

forth in this plan, especially in uniting the claims of justice and of mercy, and in the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ. The justice of God is here more awfully displayed than in all the judgments of his hand, not forgetting the punishment of the angels which sinned, and the miseries of lost men. Never did Jehovah collect so much of his wrath together, and never did such a victim fall beneath it as Christ. The benevolence of God here shines forth with ineffable lustre; such a gift he never gave before; so much transgression forgiven, so many souls redeemed, reclaimed, and made eternally happy, and at such an expense!

But all the attributes of Jehovah shine forth in the most resplendent manner in redemption; here the whole Deity is known; here God is most eminently glorified; here angels stand and gaze, while men labour to know "the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God."

OCTOBER 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, xxi.

It is a great mercy that the Divine Being in his word has clearly warned us of that which will exclude us from heaven.

Every person in his way to heaven will meet with enemies, and his safe arrival there depends upon his overcoming these enemies. He is to conquer himself, his own pride, fear, shame, concupiscence, and sloth. He must overcome the world, so as not to be allured nor deterred from duty either by its smiles or by frowns. He is to overcome the wicked one, so that Satan shall not hold him in captivity, nor lead him at his will into the snares of death.

The means of conquering these enemies are thus described,—so to know the truth, that we may be strengthened or girt by it; so to be filled with righteousness, that it may preserve us as a breast-plate; so to love the gospel of peace, that we may be prepared to become exiles in its defence; so to feel the power of faith, that we may use it as a shield; so to taste the joys of salvation, that this salvation may become our helmet; and so to have the word of God dwelling in us, that it may be in our hand as the sword of the Spirit. These are the means; but, after all, the final victory must be obtained through dependence upon him who loved us.

Such conquerors shall inherit all things: they shall have a title to all temporal blessings, so far as would be for their good, and to all spiritual and eternal blessings.—“But,” adds the apostle, “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.” How terrible is this description! A lake of fire as a portion! How besotted are sinners to choose such a portion instead of the blessed God! No wonder that, at the sight of this abyss, they call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the mountains to cover them. But, if I have been effectually warned of this dark abyss, and if I have fled to Jesus from the wrath to come, what a debtor am I to the Source of mercy, to Christ, who endured the bitter pains of death for me, and to the Holy Spirit, who convinced me of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment! How ought I to pity, to pray for, and to warn my relations, my friends, and all I meet, lest they fall into that place of torment!—

“And thou, my soul, look downwards too,
And sing recovering grace.”

OCTOBER 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ecclesiastes, iii.

Men in general are very great advocates for pleasure, and great enemies to those who would insinuate that it is "better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," and that "sorrow is better than laughter." It is allowed, indeed, that God does not call us always to weep:—"there is a time to laugh." But in such a world as this, full of rapine, murder, idolatry, superstition, oppression, misery, and death, it is difficult for a truly thoughtful man to be long cheerful. How should a man, sensible that he is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that there is no certainty of good in any acquisition; that he is positively under the sentence of death; and that he shall soon enter the gloomy passage that opens into an unknown eternity;—how should such a man, acting as a rational creature, avoid being frequently in a state of deep anxiety, if not of real sorrow?

Real Christians have been often charged with the indulgence of habitual melancholy, and with being utter enemies to all present enjoyment. In reply to this, may they not say,—“Is there not a cause?” The reason why men of thought, or men of grace, cultivate habitual seriousness, or that their countenances have assumed a settled gravity, may be, that they very frequently meditate on the following subjects:—1. That they are fallen from their original excellency, are sunk into a brutal slavery to their depraved appetites, and, in consequence, have lost the image and cheering presence of God. — 2. That they are never without sin. — 3. That they have by their transgressions pierced the Son of God. — 4. That they are in danger of perishing. — 5. That multitudes are daily perishing around them.—Surely a person who but slightly, and only now and then, thinks of subjects like these, must retire, and weep.

Do any object to this apology for melancholy, as they will call it? Let us ask, with the wise man,—“Mirth, what doeth it?” It is neither the parent nor the offspring of true happiness, nor of real character. It is generally the offspring of superficial minds. Have not the most useful persons in the world and the church been often formed in the school of adversity? Is not this the very manner of the infinite wise God in training up his people for eternity?—“Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven.” “These afflictions work for us a weight of glory.” Is not godly sorrow the only thing mentioned in scripture as never needing to be repented of?

OCTOBER 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, xii.

Religion does not forbid cheerfulness or necessary recreations. Cheerfulness is indeed the offspring of a mind well-regulated and at peace with God. While we carefully avoid all coalition with sin, and permit eternal things to have their due weight on our minds, we may be as cheerful as the lark. A cheerful and serene countenance is, indeed, a great recommendation of religion, and will be found wherever there is inward tranquillity; while gloom, moroseness, distance from others, and a heavy countenance, must arise either from our own sin or that of others. It is proper, when a Christian is placed in those circumstances which call for joy, that he should partake of outward gratifications,—yet only as a Christian. Our Lord was present at the marriage of Cana, and at one or two feasts provided by friends.—“If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat.” “Rejoice with them that rejoice.” There may be periods when temporal mercies call for the union of

friends, and outward expressions of joy. Thus far religion allows of indulgences, and the recreations of social life; so that they consist with a frame of mind suited to the exercises of religion: in this sense there is "a time to laugh." Beyond this, we may ask with the wise Monarch, who admits that there is a time to laugh,—“Mirth, what doeth it?”

Religion wholly disallows of that levity of character which destroys serious thought, and unfits the mind for communion with God. It is of far greater importance that we should be thinking beings than apes. What is the value of low buffoonery, or loud laughter, or excessive levity? These are often indulged in, when the heart remains the slave of melancholy and dissatisfactions: they are seldom much valued by men, who, though not religious, are yet considerate and sober; they often tend to the most unhappy results. He who properly enters into the real business of life, that is, considers himself as having many temporal affairs to carry to a successful and honourable conclusion, and his own soul and the souls of his family and friends to save from death, has neither time nor dispositions for levity. With such serious business before him, the time for laughter by a wise man will be cut very short. As levity often leads into temptation, and as we are prone to evil, a man will indulge with caution, as a person scarcely convalescent indulges in the luxuries of the table. If, therefore, we indulge in levity so as to destroy a becoming frame of mind, so as to encourage others less thoughtful than ourselves, and so as to leave little time for serious exercises, let us think in time whether we are not in danger of falling under our Lord's censure,—“Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.”

There are so many things hurtful, and even ruinous, in many of the public amusements of the age, that it is difficult to apologize for those who countenance them:—“Fools make a mock at sin;” and woe to that man who makes a mock at that upon which God

frowns, at that which has ruined a world, and put the Son of God to death.

“A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness,
Thrown into tumult, raptured or alarm’d,
At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
To wait a feather, or to drown a fly.”

OCTOBER 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, lvi.

It is the mark of the unregenerate, that they have no fear:—“there is no fear of God before their eyes;” no fear that sin or the world will do them any harm.

In opposition to this, it is said,—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” As it is a mark of weakness to be afraid where there exists no cause of fear, so it is equally a mark of great sottishness and fool-hardihood to be indifferent in the presence of the most imminent danger. But there can be no greater subject of terror than that of meeting a Being of infinite power as our enemy, a Being who has “the keys of death and of hell.”

From this state of desperate folly a real Christian is delivered; and, while he is a man of courage where duty calls, he trembles at the Divine word, he fears to sin. His fears arise,—1st. From a conscious sense of great sinfulness; but he is called to trust in God as the Source of mercy, who has promised to pardon iniquity, transgression, and sin.—2. From the knowledge he has of his propensity to evil; he sometimes thinks he shall be overcome by his concupiscence. God is here also the Object of trust, for he has said,—“Sin shall not have dominion over you.”—3. From his outward enemies; lest Satan or the world should get the advantage over him, and

lead him captive.—Here God is a present Help ; for he has said,—“When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”—4. From the sense he has of his great weakness. But here also he may trust in the Almighty and not be afraid ; for the Prophet Isaiah assures him, that “to them that have no might, he increases strength.”—5. From death. But God is a sure Refuge from this fear also ; since he sent his Son “to deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.”

We need not, then, be ashamed of indulging fear where there is real cause of dread. The Divine word says,—It is the evidence of rising wisdom : it forms proof of the real existence of piety. Solomon says,—“Happy is the man that fears always.” He who scorns to fear and fly from sin now, will find his fears come upon him another day as an armed man, and he shall not escape.

OCTOBER 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Exodus, ii.

It is not an unfrequent charge brought against persons of deep piety, especially if they have made any considerable sacrifices in adhering to Christ, that they are really beside themselves. But does a person who prefers a religious life to the friendship and pleasures of the world, act wisely or not?—Such a person thus reasons.—1. The service of the world and the service of God cannot be united.—2. As a person can choose no greater good than God, so he cannot sustain a greater loss than that of the Divine favour.—3. The real enjoyment a good man has of the little which God bestows upon him, is greater than the pleasures of the wicked in affluence.—4. As the happiness or the misery of a future state is eternal, so no present

acquisition can compensate for the loss of heaven and the loss of the soul. Moses, therefore, in choosing affliction with the people of God rather than the pleasures of sin for a season, having respect unto the recompense of reward, acted wisely; and so do all who follow his example.

But it was faith that enabled Moses to make this choice; faith in unseen realities. Without this faith no man will permanently choose affliction with the people of God rather than riches and pleasure. May I then possess this faith, which is the substance of things hoped for! May I not be ensnared by a fatal love of the world; since I have reason to fear that many keep up an attachment to good people, who have no real respect to the recompense of reward, and who, should persecution come, would soon be offended.

O the deplorable state of those who choose present gratification, at the expense of all hope in God, and to the ruin of the soul! How awfully will they be disappointed, when told,—“Thou hast had thy good things,”—thy days of pleasure are all over, and as thou preferredst thy sins and the creature to God, thou must now rue the consequences in everlasting banishment from the Almighty.

OCTOBER 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Peter, ii. 1—10.

The Almighty in his government of the world does not act from caprice or passion, but from principles eternal and unchangeable as himself. The Divine law is a body of rules flowing out of those principles, or out of the Divine nature itself. When man sinned, he of course armed the purity and justice of God against himself. Earthly judges have a common nature with

ourselves; indeed by them the laws are not made; their disposition may be quite opposite to these laws. But, as it respects the Divine law, disobedience is a direct proof of a temper in opposition to the Law-giver. Therefore, when the Almighty sits in judgment, he necessarily condemns, not only the crime, but the soul and body, of the offender; which condemnation arises out of the unchangeable nature of things; and on this account, a man is condemned, not exclusively in reference to the number of his sins, but to his disposition as a transgressor.

In the recovery of man regard to these eternal principles of justice and purity is, if possible, more conspicuous than in the sentence of condemnation. What could display this justice, this severity of God, more forcibly than the ignominious and terrible death of the Lord Jesus, and the extraordinary method of sanctifying believers by the influences of the Holy Ghost? Here sin appears exceedingly sinful; and the condemnation of the offender is seen to arise, not from mere sovereignty, or because Jehovah has pronounced the curse, but from the unchangeable nature of the circumstances between the Eternal Law-giver and the creature.

On this account, a substitute was necessary; for Justice must necessarily have its course, and find its victim. Christ having received in himself that punishment which justice necessarily demanded, salvation is as consistent with the justice of God, and the regular course of the law, as though sinners were saved by works. They have by their Substitute suffered the penalty of the law; and by his obedience they will after death stand complete in him, and be dealt with as though they had never sinned.

This may lead us to understand the expression "in Christ." He who believes, is secure in Christ, the Ark. There has been a transfer of man's sin to Christ, and of Christ's obedience to man: he is treated as the sinner, and we are treated as righteous, agreeably to the words of the apostle,—“He who knew no sin,

was made Sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But how shall I know that I am freed from condemnation, or that I am in Christ? By what are you actuated in your daily conduct? Do you follow the desires of the flesh and of the mind, or are you led by the examples which he has raised up and left in his church? Grant, O Lord, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, and may the fruits of this faith be found in my christian walk and conversation.

OCTOBER 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Proverbs, xii.

One of the worst vices to which men are prone, is, pride. Pride of rank, of talent, or of dress, is thoroughly contemptible; but what is called religious pride is still more detestable. If the christian character can be said to be laid in any one particular virtue, that virtue is humility. Still, though a religious man cannot boast that he is better than others, he must be blind, not to see that religion makes all who live under its influence better men than their irreligious neighbours.

The *rule of conduct* adopted by the Christian is better than that of his irreligious neighbour. This rule is the Divine word, by which he weighs and measures every thing proposed to him. He asks, Will the word of God sanction me in such a scheme, and in the pursuit of such an object? If it will not, he renounces it at once. But the rule of the wicked is, custom, fashion, the practice of the trade, and the like.

The *principles* of a true Christian are better than those by which a wicked man regulates his conduct.—1. He lives in the fear of God; as far as this principle operates, he must be more just, and upright,

and true, than his neighbour, whose only fear is that of detection. — 2. A real Christian is taught and influenced to love his fellow-creatures; this must operate to destroy that selfishness which is the very bane of society. Under the influence of this philanthropic spirit, what has not been done, what is not doing, to remove human misery, and to make men wise, holy, and happy! — 3. A Christian regards the world, and all its interests as nothing compared with the approbation of God. Now such a man is less likely to go into schemes of fraud, than he who, being intent on aggrandizing himself, yields to the perception, that he must not be over scrupulous about the means of doing it. — 4. A Christian absolutely expects a future reckoning, and that he shall be judged according to his works; he must therefore be a better man than he who says, — “Where is the promise of his coming?”

It would be very easy to show, that in all ages the righteous has proved himself better than his neighbour. Paul was better than Elymas, John was better than Judas, Fenelon was better than Voltaire, Washington was better than Buonaparte, Howard was better than Robespierre. He must be a most unrighteous judge, who should say that Mahometanism has done as much good to men as Christianity. But our proposition is proved from the general expectation of men respecting serious Christians: they actually demand from them a high state of morals, and always upbraid the person in whom it is not realized.

The Christian is a more excellent character in every relation and connexion; and this ought to recommend religion to all, and should encourage the young and all others to set out in the way to Zion. But the real worth of the christian character will be far better displayed another day, when Christ shall come “to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

OCTOBER 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Galatians, ii.

Considering man as mortal, and as accountable to a holy and just God, there can be no question so important to him as this, How can I be clear with God? This has been the inquiry of thoughtful persons in all ages. The Prophet Micah asks,—“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?” Men untaught by the Spirit of God have generally concluded, that acceptance with God is to be obtained by good dispositions and good works; but the apostle in these words declares, that by the deeds of the law (and these certainly include all the good in the power of man) no flesh shall be justified.

This doctrine will be clearly established, if we consider who the Lawgiver is,—an omniscient, inflexibly holy, and inflexibly just, God, before whom the least frailty must stand condemned. If we consider the law itself, we shall still more clearly see, that, unless it speak falsely, by it we cannot be justified. It is spiritual, it penetrates our inmost powers, and demands perfect obedience. Before such a law all human righteousness has been well compared to rejected garments, Isaiah, lxiv. 6. The law then can only discover to us our deformity;—“by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

But is there no other way of justification? Is the way of acceptance completely inaccessible? Blessed be God, faith shows us a righteousness which may be our's:—Isaiah says,—“He hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness.”

Being thus justified, the Christian can come with boldness to the throne of grace; his acceptance is founded, not on something yet to be done, but on something already done, and done to perfection. This is the sure foundation on which his peace is built:

—“being justified by faith, he has peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

OCTOBER 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, cxlv.

“The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him.”—These words come with great propriety from the lips of David, who says,—“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles.” “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.”

Prayer, in these words, and in other parts of the Divine writings, is mentioned as a calling upon God, by which expression we are perhaps to understand, that the petitioner considers himself in a state of distress, and that none but God can deliver him. Peter’s case and Daniel’s may afford examples:—“Beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me.” “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God.”

There are many periods in the life of a Christian, when such short ejaculations as the above may be very suitable,—times of sudden temptation, when the enemy comes in like a flood; times of violent bodily pain; times when evil desires arise, or when outward adversaries suddenly press upon us, and there is no opportunity of retirement. At these times, how cheering the consideration that the Lord, as our Deliverer, is nigh unto all that call upon him; and that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved!

For our encouragement herein, we have to consider, that the very nature of God, which is essential goodness, inclines him to be gracious; that the promises are full of encouragement, and that the name of Christ is a sure passport to the throne, and a sure

pledge that we shall be heard and delivered. We have abundance of examples to encourage us. The three Hebrews called, no doubt, on the God of Jacob, who was soon near unto them, for Nebuchadnezzar says,—“Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Jonah says,—“Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” As soon as Peter cried out,—“Lord, save me,” Jesus immediately stretched forth his hand, and caught him. True Christians have the privilege of access to the throne, since he on whom they call is their heavenly Father; Christ is their Saviour; and they have special promises to encourage them;—“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

OCTOBER 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—2 Peter, i.

No person can read the history of the christian churches, as recorded in the apostolic writings, without perceiving a painful difference between those societies and the churches of the present day. This melancholy contrast appears most striking, when we compare the eminent piety of the primitive believer with the piety observable among modern professors. In the former, religion appeared not as an appendage to life, but as that which engaged their whole hearts. The views they had of their christian calling elevated them above earthly entanglements. In their minds faith was the substance of things hoped for; hope caused them to purify themselves as Christ is pure; their love to the saints was not mere worldly friendship, but manifested its Divine origin in substantial acts of benevolent service. As the certain effect of

fervent piety, they are described as waiting for the coming of the day of God, and as entertaining a holy confidence that when absent from the body they should be present with the Lord. They were the adopted sons of God, and they became followers of God as dear children, considering themselves bound to a behaviour worthy of their adoption. Such were the ideas the first Christians had of their holy profession, and such the dignity with which they supported it. The consequences were most important: strangers were attracted, and brought to join themselves to the Lord, and to the church, by the will of God; they enjoyed the blessedness which the gospel brings; and their capacity for active service in the church was great, and met with peculiar witness from on high.

Some persons despair of attaining to such a state of eminent piety, and therefore content themselves with something far inferior, which they suppose will answer the end of getting them to heaven. Such a lax state as this must be a very uncertain one, if not very unsafe; it must be attended with great danger of backsliding, if not of final apostasy. Lukewarm Christians like these cannot hope to enjoy the comforts of religion when they shall feel the greatest need of them, especially in the hour of dissolution. Nor is it possible that they can glorify God in their day and generation. That is an awful warning to the church at Laodicea,—“Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will cast thee out of my mouth.”

OCTOBER 26.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, lv.

That the Almighty, after the fall, should govern the world by written laws, was to be expected; and

his gracious designs in thus giving a written revelation of his will appear to have been,—1. To give the knowledge of himself, the necessity of which we now see, since this knowledge the wisest have not been able to communicate, and for the want of it the nations have followed the most shocking polytheism. —2. To give the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Saviour, that we might be restored to the Divine mercy, to the Divine image, and then admitted to heaven. What a striking instance of the universal feeling respecting the want of a Saviour we have in the case of the Hindoos, who resort to the rivers of their country, to wash away their crimes!—3. To unite man to man, by giving them in this revelation one interest, one Father, one Saviour, and one home; and thus to banish from the earth all deceit, impurity, injustice, oppression, and war.

The prophet assures us, that this design shall be accomplished, and that the word shall not return to its Divine Author void, but shall accomplish his pleasure, and answer in the thing for which he has sent it. The Divine Being pursues every thing on a large scale; if he speak, a world is created; if he bless, he gives a crown of glory; if he punish, unspeakable misery is inflicted. It cannot be consistent with the greatness of the work of redemption, the dignity of the Redeemer, and the bitterness of his sufferings, that the whole christian dispensation should be brought to a close with such small results as have hitherto followed its promulgation. Nor are we left here to mere conjecture, nor are we indulging an unscriptural hope on this subject; for the “knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth,” “all nations shall be blessed in the Redeemer,” and the whole human society shall form one holy happy family, for “all shall know Christ from the greatest even to the least.”

It may appear surprising to us, that a gospel so necessary to the safety of man, and which contains such inestimable blessings, should have extended no

further. But we must remember, that the thoughts of Jehovah are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. He is not slack concerning the fulfilment of his promises: a thousand years to him are only as one day to us. Every thing great which he has hitherto done for the world, has been done after having been, as it appeared to us, long waited for. But,

“If he speak a promise once,
The eternal grace is sure.”

The result will fully answer the expectation of him who paid the price of our ransom with his own blood, of Him who said,—“If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.”—O that the word of the Lord may not return to the Fountain of Truth without accomplishing our illumination!

OCTOBER 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Zechariah, iii.

Among some who call themselves Christians, there is no mistake more common than this, that persons who have been baptized, and have ratified their vows at the Lord's Supper, will arrive at heaven without the least difficulty. Yet no sentiment is more false: for the scriptures call the very entrance into the christian life, the “strait gate,” and the way to heaven “the narrow way.” In reference to the difficulties here alluded to, we are called upon to strive to enter by this gate, for that many who do seek to enter in thereat, are not able. The righteous themselves, it is said, are scarcely saved, and those who are saved, are described as brands plucked out of the very fire.

Let me never then imagine that heaven is an easy acquisition. The Divine law, the holy nature and justice of the Almighty, and all the threatenings in

the Bible, protest against the admission of such a sinner as I am, unrenewed, into those abodes of righteousness. Let me further consider what it cost the Saviour to purchase a title to this inheritance, before any sinner could be admitted there; and that all they before the throne washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, or there would have been no heaven for them. But I ought also to reflect on the obstacles there are in man to that work of regeneration without which he cannot see the kingdom of God: no less a power than that of the Holy Ghost is necessary to create the heart anew, and the same energy is daily required to hold up and strengthen the Christian in that warfare in which he has to contend with internal, external, and invisible enemies. Every sinner is to be called out of darkness into light, from the power of Satan unto God, from ungodly acquaintances, evil habits, inveterate prejudices, and false confidence in his own righteousness, before he sets one step heavenwards. Surely then I can never think that the kingdom of heaven can be obtained without pains. No, every one, however excellent his education, however regular his life may have been, must be considered as a brand plucked out of the fire. The Christian church in heaven is called a great wonder:—"There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

If it be so difficult to make a safe and sure journey to heaven; if many promise fair, but never set out; if others who appear to be in the way, stumble, and backslide, and perish; may I be awakened from my lethargy! May I lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset me, and run with patience the race that is set before me, looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of faith!

OCTOBER 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—James, iv.

The wisest and best men in all ages have been duly affected with the brevity and vanity of human life. Jacob, after having lived nearly one hundred and thirty years, said,—“My days have been few and evil.” Job says,—“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle;” and David,—“As for man, his days are as grass; as a shadow that passeth away.”

But alas! this brevity of life is seldom realized by the unconverted, except in dying circumstances, and then the discovery may come too late. But we ought to have our minds affected, not only by the vanity, but by the absolute uncertainty, of life. We are like men in a field of battle, among whom the instruments of death are flying in every direction. Or, we are like a number of condemned criminals, who are compelled to witness day by day the execution of some one of their companions.

If these things be so, surely nothing can be more reasonable than that we should pause, and inquire whether any thing of moment is to be done in this state of transient and uncertain existence. Every thing connected with the happiness of every individual, during a never-ending state of existence, must be done now,—or never. This is a state of probation, in which all our thoughts, words, and actions, bear a reference to our future state, and which will give birth to the whole of our circumstances in that state for ever: we are now sowing, the harvest will be gathered in eternity. What then is that which must be done in us, in time? We must be brought to a true sense of our spiritual state; we must exercise a lively faith; we must ground all our hopes of acceptance and salvation upon the sacrifice and merits of Jesus Christ; we must be new creatures in him. All this must be done during a life, which, at its

close, will appear to have passed away like a shadow. A great part of life is, with many, gone already. How wisely then does he live, who lives for eternity, who works for eternity, who is fast ripening for eternity!

Remember, man of the world, how circumscribed are the bounds into which all thy schemes must be brought: thou art but the brother of the ephemera, which are born and die the same day. Collect into one grand whole all that earth contains, and attach it to a being respecting whom this is true,—“Thy life is even as a vapour;” and then weigh the value of it all.

What claims have they upon our fervent prayers and tenderest compassion, whose all is confined to a life which is compared to a shadow that flies away! But how rich, how blessed, is he whose happiness cannot be affected “by things present, or things to come, by life, or death, or any other creature.”

OCTOBER 29.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, liv.

“The world’s all title-page: there’s no contents.” This is not only true of depraved creatures, to whom the poet applies it, but of all earthly objects. The world, in its best state, without God, is a wretched portion. We see something of its vanity, when we attend the last hours of a young man cut off when all was gay and flattering around him; cut down like a flower, which retains something of its bloom even after it has perished. We learn a similar lesson near the death-bed of the man of business, stopped short in the midst of the most intense pursuit of wealth, and while laying the foundation of an edifice in which he assured himself he should for many days bid adieu to care; but he is snatched away, and the scenes of

his activity know him no more. It is here that we learn by what a feeble tenure health, riches, and friends, are held.

But the apostle leads our minds to a people who are in possession of a happiness which they can never lose. The love of God includes all possible blessings that heaven and earth afford, that an Almighty Being can give, or an immortal creature through eternity can enjoy. Thus the true Christian is in possession of an unalienable portion; seeing God is his, and he is the Lord's. He is therefore declared to be heir to an inheritance which is incorruptible, and fades not away; to a crown which never fades, and to a mansion not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

But how may I know that I have a share in Christ? If I have a broken-hearted sense of my sinfulness and misery; if I am found seeking the Divine favour through the death and merits of Christ; and if I am aiming in my tempers and conduct to please him; these are indications of his grace and favour, and that, though I am utterly unworthy of his regard, he has remembered me in my low estate.

Who would not be a Christian? Who would not choose even affliction with the people of God, rather than all the treasures of Egypt? Bring hither, O world, thy happy man, thy greatest favourite, blooming in health, swimming in pleasures, adorned with honours, admired and caressed by the gay, his store-houses filled with treasure, his lands increased, fortunate in the bequests of others, surrounded with friends and favourites, and proud in a rising family,—at the sound of one short sentence, he turns pale, and loses the very remembrance of happiness,—“This night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Shall we envy a man in a condemned cell, because he has a large estate and a numerous family?—

“Lord, I adore thy matchless grace,
That bade me seek superior bliss.”

OCTOBER 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, iii.

Some persons treat a religious life as though it were mean and contemptible: but could these persons see how sin degrades them; how it cuts them off from the favour of the greatest and best of Beings, subjects them to violent and infamous passions, strips them of all hope, and exposes them to a resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt; they would, surely, change their judgment.

Others profess to fear that the influence of religious principles would have a fatal effect on their worldly prospects; if not reduce them to a state of poverty. These persons have yet to learn, that godliness is profitable to all things; that it has the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come; and that things present, as well as things to come, are included in the inheritance of the Christian.

We must suppose that the apostle includes among present things all that are necessary, that is, all that will most surely conduce to the great destiny, including time and eternity, which awaits us. We were made in reference to some object to which our powers are suited. This object must include more than the gratifications of appetite, and the enjoyments of the brute. It must be commensurate with our capacities, and endless as our duration. The Divine Being orders the present lot of his people, therefore, with a direct reference to eternity much more than to time. All present necessary things, then, are our's; and that, in connexion with the Divine blessing, making them all administer to our good. Beyond this a Christian can have no wants.

In all "to come" we must include whatever is necessary to prepare us for the right enjoyment of the future. But of what there is to come, who shall

give the inventory? Who has the necessary powers of description? Absence of all evil: who shall describe this? God as an everlasting Portion: what conception can lay hold of this? What the Almighty is, we cannot tell: we see something of him as the great Source of Being, something of him in the multitude, the beauty, and the grandeur of his works;—"but who by searching can find out God?" Who shall describe to us what he is in himself, what it is to be perfect as he is perfect, to be near him, to behold his glory?—All this is included in things to come.

All these are mine, if I am Christ's; but I cannot be his, unless I have seen my error in wandering from him, unless I give myself up to him, unless I seek to be like him, and be preparing to meet him.

OCTOBER 31.

Scripture selected for the day.—Amos, iv.

The far greater part of men's days are spent in preparing for this life. Childhood and youth are unreservedly devoted to qualify us for earthly pursuits; after this period, time, with most, instead of being devoted in some measure to the interests of eternity, is spent wholly for the perishing part of the man. The sinner's creed can be resolved into nothing but atheism; his impiety, total neglect of prayer, and all serious religion, and his irregular life, all bespeak the language of his heart;—"No God."

Many are found, who think some preparation necessary, without knowing in what true preparation consists: they apply for human absolution; they afflict themselves for a season; they accomplish a partial reform.

Upon the heart of the true Christian this preparation lies as a daily concern; hereby he is urged to labour, that, whether present or absent, he may be

accepted of the Lord. He who is thus prepared enjoys strength to fight with the great enemy leagued with sin and death. His hope is cast as an anchor within the veil: he says,—“I know in whom I have believed:” “I know that my Redeemer liveth;” and that he hath said,—“He that believeth shall not be ashamed.” These dying eyes shall see him; these hands shall be lifted up in the shouts of victory, or shall lay my crown of righteousness at his blessed feet; this tongue, soon to be silent in death, shall be unloosed and employed for ever in his praise; these feet shall run, and never tire, in the heavenly road; these ears shall be devoted with rapture to the symphonies of his praise; and this redeemed body, raised in incorruption, glory, and immortality, shall, joined to my perfected spirit, be for ever his. How sweet will then be his presence, how charming his name, how melodious his praise from the myriads of his redeemed people!

NOVEMBER 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xlviii.

There are only two classes of men who act thoroughly up to their principles,—the infidel, who believes nothing, and therefore does nothing, and fears nothing; and the sincere Christian, whose faith and hope are influential principles. But how inconsistent are they who believe there is a heaven, and yet never seek it; a hell, and yet never shun it.

To a sinner there is nothing in the Divine existence but terror; but, as soon as he is turned to God, and the Divine favour is desired, he rejoices to say,—“This God of Zion is our God: he will be our Guide even unto death, and then our God for ever and ever.” In Jehovah he meets with a Friend who never forsakes, a good which cannot be taken away. Such a