

“of all nations;” according to Malachi, “the Sun of Righteousness, the Purifier and Refiner!” Now in none of these descriptions have we the idea of an earthly conqueror, but that of a Saviour from moral darkness, defilement, and misery; and these scriptures being read in the synagogue every sabbath-day, it would seem that the Jewish church were plainly directed, throughout the whole dispensation, to the Messiah as “the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” “Of which salvation,” saith the apostle Peter, “the prophets have inquired and searched diligently; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ,* which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Hence, it would appear, that the grand subject to which the minds of the prophets were drawn, and about which they *diligently inquired*, was the sufferings, and not the civil conquests, of the Messiah.

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FEBRUARY 1.

Scripture selected for the day. —Matthew, i. 17—25.

The last of the prophets had said, “The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple.” And after this long night, spent in watching for the Star of Bethlehem, and waiting for the Desire of all nations, behold, he comes:—“Born of a woman; born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Jews, Mussulmans, and some bearing the christian name, stumble at the miraculous conception. A worm saying to infinite efficiency, “Thus far shalt thou go, but no further!” What temerity!

* What a striking proof we have here of the Deity of Christ:—“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” —2 Peter, i. 21; and this Divine Agent is here called “the Spirit of Christ.”

But what condescension is here! He takes not on him the nature of angels, but he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Wonder, O my soul, that an infinitely holy Being should consent to be "made sin for us;" become accursed; to take the traitor's nature, and die the traitor's doom. O earth, earth, earth, hear these unutterably glorious tidings; receive this unspeakable gift; and let all nature join with all human voices in welcoming the descending Saviour. How awful, that the celebration of the birth of Christ, who came to *make an end of sin*, and to *bring in everlasting righteousness*, should be profaned by the most daring crimes against his sacred authority, and the design of his incarnation: gluttony, drunkenness, and all their attendant sins, are made a part of the circumstances of this festival, just as though the subjects of a restored sovereign should determine to celebrate the anniversary of his restoration by acts of rebellion. What a proof that the religion of Christ cannot make real progress but as men are made real Christians!

FEBRUARY 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, lxi.

As a public Teacher, it was evident, that grace, abundant grace, was poured upon the lips of Christ; he was capable of rousing all the powers of the soul, and of producing all the impressions he chose: his words "were spirit and life." He could excite in the minds of his hearers *sadness*, "And he went away sorrowful;"—or *admiration*, "Never man spake like this man;"—or *conviction*, "Being convicted in their own consciences, they went out one by one;"—or *consciousness of guilt*, "They were offended in him, for they saw that he had spoken this parable against them;"—or *holy resolutions*, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

In producing these effects, there was manifest in his preaching,—1. *Great perspicuity*: witness his comparisons and parables.—2. *Peculiar affection*: instances of which we have in the parable of the prodigal son, in his last discourses with his disciples, and when he took children into his arms.—3. *Great faithfulness*: of which so many instances must occur to every one, that it is needless to give examples.—4. *Great earnestness*: exemplified in the parable of Dives, in the latter part of the discourse on the mount, and when he treats of the last judgment.—5. *Great seriousness* of spirit.—6. *Deep knowledge* of the human heart, and of the actual circumstances and prejudices of his hearers.—7. *Perfect suitability* in his discourses to the case of his hearers.—8. *Sovereign authority*, in the delivery of the word. How true it is, “Never man spake like Jesus Christ!”

FEBRUARY 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, viii. 2, 3.

The most interesting living scene the earth ever beheld, was exhibited when our Lord was surrounded by multitudes of the sons and daughters of affliction, and when was realized the description which he himself gave to the disciples of John:—“The blind receive their sight,—the lame walk,—the lepers are cleansed,—the deaf hear,—the dead are raised up,—and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” What a scene is here! To the blind, the transporting sight of wife, children, friends, all full of ecstasy, and of all the beauties of creation and art, opened in a moment! Might not this, in an inferior sense, be called “marvellous light?” “The ears of the deaf are unstopped; the lame man leaps like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sings.” Who does not wish

to have been there,—to have “beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” and to have joined in the greetings, “Hosannah in the highest: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!”

We may suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ was influenced by three motives in the performance of miracles;—compassion for the miserable, who were generally the subjects upon which these miracles were wrought,—the establishment of his Divine mission,—and the display of his power to save from sin and misery.

The first miracle recorded by the evangelist Matthew, relates to a leper, who came to him as soon as he had ended his sermon on the mount. In this miracle, our Lord Jesus Christ, no doubt, intended to display his power to cleanse mankind from “all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” Every penitent knows that the leprosy of sin has diffused its poison through all his powers, made him a loathsome object to God, angels, and good men, and threatens him with everlasting exclusion from the society of the blessed. Under these convictions, he is persuaded that no deeds of charity, no duties, no penances, can cleanse him, and that none but Christ can save him; and he comes by prayer to Christ, as this poor Jewish leper did, and says, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” No sooner did this man thus apply, than he obtained a cure:—“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, and said, I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” And if we, in reference to our moral pollution, be sensible of our misery, and desire healing; if we come to Christ, and say, as this man did, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” we shall surely be saved. But, if we be ignorant of our disease, or, having some knowledge of it, still neglect to come to Christ, we shall assuredly perish.

And is sin then a disease as loathsome as the

leprosy?—It is frequently so described in scripture; and these allusions are fully justified by the effects of sin on our spiritual powers. How grossly then are men deceived respecting the nature of transgression, and how deeply have I been involved in this deception! But, oh, thou wonderful Redeemer, effect a cure! No pity, no hand, no blood, but thine, can reach my case.

FEBRUARY 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, vii. 1—10.

The generous and compassionate feelings of the centurion towards his servant, ("he was dear to him,") deserve our admiration and imitation. Severity to those beneath him, ill becomes a professed Christian, whose compassion should be extended even to his beast. But the humility and faith of this Roman soldier are still more surprising:—'Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. And why shouldst thou be put to all this trouble? Remaining where thou art, one word of thine shall effect a cure. I am a man under others, and yet even my word is efficacious, for, if I say to this man, Go, he goeth; or to another, Come, he cometh; or to my servant, Do this, he doeth it.' And when Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel; not among the children of the Father of the faithful. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

The disease which oppressed this servant was the palsy. Sin has reduced our spiritual powers to a condition greatly resembling the effects of this disease on the body. We are not only incapable of rising, and

effecting our own cure, but the remedy must be applied by other hands, by those of the great Physician.

This example, given us by a heathen, is well worthy the imitation of christian masters, and ministers, in their concerns, respectively, with servants, children, and hearers. Was the Saviour gracious to the centurion's servant, through the faith and prayers of his master? Let us not doubt that the same solicitude for our dependants will receive the approbation of Christ, and in many cases be followed by his effectual blessing.

FEBRUARY 5.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, viii.
23—27.

The history of this miracle is very brief. Our Lord Jesus Christ entered a vessel, accompanied by his disciples; and, wearied, probably, with the labours of the day, fell asleep. But a tempest arose, and the waves covered the vessel, so that the disciples, exceedingly alarmed, came to him and awoke him, saying, "Lord, save us, we are perishing." After reproving them gently for their want of faith, he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. The disciples, overcome with astonishment, exclaimed among themselves, "What a wonderful person is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" This miracle shows us the safety of all those who are under the guardian care of Christ; "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

The power of Christ over the most boisterous of these natural elements is not more entire than over all the discordant elements which agitate human affairs. Many persons are ready to imagine, that to be persecuted and shut up in a prison is a heavy and

most trying calamity, and yet the presence of Christ not only rendered these places innoxious to Paul and Barnabas, to Bunyan, to Alleine, and many of the victims of superstition, but produced in their minds a calm that may well astonish those who know not the consolations of true religion. During the dissolution of the body in the most violent and painful forms, how astonishing the fortitude and composure of the martyrs! This was to be attributed to the presence of the Saviour:—"When thou walkest through the fire, I will be with thee: thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Hence from amidst the flames, and while his body was dissolving, the voice of one of the martyrs was heard, saying,—“None but Christ,—None but Christ.” Let me not fear, then, though I should be called to suffer for Christ, and to feel all the fury of the tempest, till constrained to say with David,—“All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;” for Christ, who rebukes the winds and the sea, has promised to be with me, and his voice can soon command a perfect calm.

The cases of Manasseh and Saul show that the Lord Jesus can subdue the most violent tempest of rage in the soul, and produce a peace which passes all understanding.

FEBRUARY 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, vi. 35—44.

Although it is inconsistent with the Divine dispensations, that the seed of the righteous should be seen begging their bread, except where such a visitation is intended as a particular and designed affliction, yet many real Christians have been reduced to great straits for their subsistence. To encourage such to trust in him, no doubt, was part of the design of our

Lord in working this miracle: he fed five thousand persons, with a loaf for each thousand, and two small fishes for the whole; and after all were filled, there were taken up fragments more than double the original quantity of food. But what did he, to produce such a wonderful effect? The historian merely says,—“He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”

Surely, then, impoverished, humble Christian, thou mayest, in the use of all lawful means of support, look up to Him who possesses such a sovereign command over the produce of the earth;—thou mayest commit all thy cares to Him; for He has promised that thy bread shall be given, and that thy water shall be sure. He who has taught us to pray for our daily bread, is He who answers prayer. Besides, “our heavenly Father knoweth that we need all these things.”—“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

How is it, that some persons appear better able to trust in God for the salvation of their souls than for the common supports of life? Does it arise from the idea, that the promises of scripture belong much more to our spiritual concerns than to our temporal ones, and that our present affairs are left more in our own hands than those of a future state? This is founded upon mistake; the attention of the Almighty is as really fixed upon the supplies for every hour, as upon our partaking of the Bread of Life, of which, if a man eat, he shall never die;—upon the sparrow falling to the ground, as upon the fall of a kingdom. The same hand that plucked thee, O desponding Christian, as a brand from the burning, is, and will be engaged, to the end of thy life, to feed thee with food convenient.

FEBRUARY 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xv.
21—28.

The history of this miracle is most deserving of our meditation, on account of the amiable impurity, the deep humility, and the persevering faith, of this poor gentile woman. Her daughter was grievously vexed with an evil spirit; and having heard of the power of Jesus to save men, as well as of his compassion, she comes to Christ, and says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Christ preserves an unaccountable and awful silence: he answered her not a word. His disciples next interpose; not, perhaps, from the most amiable motives; but they intreat him to give her some answer, and send her away, For, say they, she crieth after us. So far from any good arising from their interposition, however, her case seems to have been made worse by it. Still more mysteriously, Christ repulses the suppliant:—"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The wonder is, that the poor woman, thus apparently cut off from all hope, did not return as she came; for our Lord appeared to say as much as this, Thou art not to expect help from me. But it being thus brought about, that Christ notices her case, and gives her some kind of answer, though full of discouragement, she does not despair. What a reproof to the fearful soul is this, Thou hast many promises expressly inviting thee to come to the throne of grace, and hast never been denied; and yet thou art ready to say, I may as well cease to pray, for I do not see that I am any better for prayer, or that I obtain any answer. But what if Christ should say to thee, "I am not sent to thee," wouldest thou still continue to pray? Remember, this woman did, and gained her suit too. "Then came she, and worshipped him, and said, Lord, help me." At length,

Christ addresses his answer to the woman herself, but it seems as though he intended to add insult to denial;—"It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Not repelled even by this answer, which, one would think, would have filled her with despair, seeing it now appeared as if the account she had heard of the compassion of Jesus was incorrect, she even takes up the degrading words of our Lord, and turns them into an irresistible argument;—"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Christ had now obtained all he sought, that is, an example of holy importunity, humility, and faith, which might instruct and refresh his church to the end of time; and he immediately says, doubtless with a gracious smile upon his countenance, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—How true it is, that Christians "have not, because they ask not!"

FEBRUARY 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, v. 2—15.

We are assured by the apostle, that "the prince of the power of the air ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience," and that such persons are led by Satan at his will. By this miracle of mercy, Christ intended, no doubt, that we should be confirmed in the belief, that he turns men from the power of Satan, and translates them out of that kingdom into the kingdom of God, according to his sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he declared that he was sent to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised.

The history of this wretched man is most striking, and to a serious mind conveys much instruction respecting the dreadful effects of Satan's influence;

as well as the ability of Christ in casting out the strong man armed.

On a certain occasion, as Christ in his itineracies with his disciples entered the country of the Gadarenes, there met him, a man, who usually took up his abode in the caverns or tombs there. He was so fierce, that, though he had been bound by his friends with fetters, he had broken them asunder, and in these dreary places, or in the mountains, remained day and night, crying, and cutting himself with stones, so that the neighbourhood was filled with terror, neither durst any man go that way. Christ, however, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost," went thither; and this man no sooner saw him, than he ran, and worshipped him; when the Saviour commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out of him. The effect was like that which was produced when Christ rebuked the winds and the waves:—there was a great calm: the poor man was immediately seen sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, praying to Jesus that he would permit him to remain with him. This wish might have been excited by a principle of gratitude, or by the fear that he should be safe no where but in the presence of the Saviour. Christ, however, wishes him rather to gladden the hearts of his friends, and lead them to believe in him as the Redeemer; and therefore he says to him,—“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him.”

How dreadful is the tyranny of Satan! Well may he be called the roaring lion, which roameth abroad seeking whom he may devour. How well for the Christian that Christ prays for him; and as he did for Peter, when Satan desired to have him!

FEBRUARY 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, x. 46—52.

Little did Bartimeus expect when he arose on the morning of the day of his cure, that it would be such a day of mercy to him. He had heard of the wonders wrought by the Saviour, and had, perhaps, a faint hope that Christ might some day or other visit the town of Jericho, in which he lived. On this day, however, he could little expect such a visit: a few alms, as he sat by the way-side, was all he expected. But the Lord Jesus, accompanied by his disciples and a great concourse, in leaving the town, happened to pass through the road by the side of which sat Bartimeus. The blind man, hearing the footsteps and the confused noise of so great a crowd, naturally inquired into the cause, and some friendly voice told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing. Cheered by the welcome news, he begins to cry out,—“Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Many charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried the more a great deal,—“Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying, Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his upper loose garment, that he might make greater haste, arose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”

Here, then, we see the Sun of Righteousness shining on this poor mendicant with healing beneath his wings. The gift of sight, where the person has been born blind, appears to be one of the most welcome blessings a gracious God can bestow. The glorious works of creation are first seen by us in

our infancy, when our powers are not capable of comprehending their beauty or magnificence; and before we grow to riper years they have become familiar objects, and fail to excite admiration. But when sight is given to a grown up person, whose imagination is naturally warm, who has panted a million of times to see the objects he has heard described with enthusiasm, and who possesses a strong affection to their Great Author; how glorious to him must the works of God appear! Let the first object such a person sees, be, the rising sun;—what astonishment;—what transports he must feel! Now these are the sensations which are attributed to the man who is brought out of spiritual darkness: he is said to be brought into “marvellous light.” I have heard too from more than one good man, that, when they were first called by grace, this visible universe, to their feelings, became like a new world: they felt a new interest in it. How admirably has Cowper touched this interesting subject:—

“He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the vallies his,
And the resplendent rivers, his t'enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
And smiling say, My Father made them all.
Are they not his by a peculiar right:
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann'd, and built, and still upholds a world,
So cloth'd with beauty, for rebellious man?”

FEBRUARY 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xi. 12—21.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had, probably, two reasons for this action,—the one, to fix the faith of his

disciples in his future conquests, prefigured by what had just taken place, his triumphant entry into Jerusalem:—the other, to awaken the attention of men to the absolute importance of bringing forth the fruits of repentance and faith under the gospel ministry. The allusion is similar when the same fruits are demanded of the hearers by John the Baptist:—“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

There were leaves on the fig-tree, but no fruit; so, in the case of many professors of the gospel, they possess outward gifts, which are very showy and prepossessing, but none of the fruits of righteousness, by which the heart is proved to be gracious. Such professors, purely on account of barrenness, will be numbered with hypocrites and unbelievers, and cast into the state of perdition.

O my soul, examine thyself: art thou bringing forth good fruit? Remember, not only is fruit required, but *good* fruit. We do not blame a person for cutting down a tree in his orchard, which for years has yielded no fruit; nor can we arraign the conduct of God, who expects from those planted in the courts of the Lord, that they should bear fruit to his glory, on pain, in case of failure, of being cast into the fire.

How soon we may be removed from under this culture, and placed where the very leaves of our profession shall wither, we know not.—“And presently the fig-tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away!” And how often have ministers, in British India especially, been compelled to apply this lamentation to persons removed from under the means of religious instruction;—“How soon has such a one withered away?”

FEBRUARY II.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, v. 1—16.

Some persons suppose that the miraculous properties attributed to this pool were not real, and that the sacred writer merely records what was vulgar opinion. Whether, however, the efficacy of these waters was real or imaginary, and whether the idea that at a certain time an angel did descend and trouble or stir up the waters, or whether this agitation (still however essential to the cure) was effected by some natural cause or not, here was a poor man no better for Bethesda's pool, though he had been afflicted thirty-eight years. But when the Lord of life came to the spot, his cure became certain. Christ interrogating him whether he wished to be cured, he said, he had been many a time miserably disappointed, for that when the waters had been troubled, he had no friend to carry him down the steps, and put him into the pool; but that while he was making the effort to descend, creeping as fast as he could, some one stepped down before him, and deprived him of the cure. In this manner this poor cripple related his painful story, little thinking that the voice which then addressed him was the voice of him who "carried our sorrows." Jesus, without waiting for any effort of faith, said, Arise, take up thy bed and walk. He did so, nor asked to whom he had been indebted for such a wonderful deliverance. The sorrows of thirty-eight years removed in a moment, and yet the kindness of the benefactor not once thought of!—For when the Jews asked him, he did not know who had cured him. Perhaps his sudden joy placed him in a state of temporary delirium, and, incapable of restraining himself in the use of his limbs after they had lain useless thirty-eight years, he was now hastening home, carrying on his shoulder the old mat, and a few rags, which,

one may suppose, formed what is here called his bed.

The Lord Jesus, satisfied with having filled the heart with joy, and made the lame to leap like a hart, waited neither for the thanks of the man, nor the applauses of the multitude, but "conveyed himself away," that is, withdrew privately, "a multitude being in that place."

In the treatment which our Lord experienced, on this, and similar occasions, what an awful illustration have we of human perverseness and impiety!—"Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day."

FEBRUARY 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xi. 1—46.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." That we are dead in trespasses and sins, and that it is the power of Christ alone, as the Resurrection and the Life, which is to raise us, is the express decision of the Divine word. To give an illustration of this doctrine by a striking miracle, was, perhaps, part of the design of our Lord in raising Lazarus from the dead, instead of hastening to remove his sickness. This history is full of incidents most touching: there was a family in Judea, composed of a brother and two sisters, to which our Lord was particularly attached. Lazarus, the brother, was visited with sickness, and the news was forwarded to Jesus, by the sisters in this affecting message,—"Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus, however, delayed his departure, intending to permit Lazarus to die, that he might have an opportunity of raising him from

the dead. At length, knowing by the power of his omniscience, that Lazarus was dead, he went to Bethany, the village where the family resided, and on his arrival, heard that Lazarus had been dead four days, and was buried. On his approach to the house, Martha met him, and said, apparently as though she intended to reprove him for his delay,—“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died; but I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” She remembered, no doubt, how the former prophets, especially Elisha, had raised the dead.—“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.” Martha admitted that he would rise at the resurrection; but Jesus drew her attention to himself as “the Resurrection and the Life,” and brought her to acknowledge that he was the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world. She next calls her sister, who seems to have possessed a temper more retiring than Martha’s, and upon whom the loss of Lazarus appears to have fallen heavily indeed. As soon as she approaches Jesus, she falls at his feet, and says, like Martha,—“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Their Jewish acquaintance, by floods of tears, seemed to join in the same inquiry,—“Lord, why didst thou not come sooner? The scene now becomes, as it were, too much for the Saviour; he inquires for the grave, and on his way thither, gives vent to his grief:—“Jesus wept.” Arriving at the cave which contained the body, he again groans within himself, and orders the stone to be removed. Jesus addressed himself to his heavenly Father, to convince his disciples and the spectators, that he performed this miracle in conjunction with the Father, and then, with a loud voice, says, “Lazarus, come forth;” when he that had been dead four days, rose up, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face covered with a napkin. Jesus said, Loose him, and let him go. The history here closes; but our imagination sees Lazarus, and his sisters, all at

the feet of Jesus, testifying their gratitude, while Lazarus exclaims, with Thomas, clasping his feet, and looking up to Jesus, My Lord, and my God! Thou art indeed "the Resurrection and the Life;" and this life which thou hast restored, shall be consecrated to thy service.—How much of the life of Christ have Christians yet to hear recited in the kingdom of their Father!

FEBRUARY 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xiii. 1—9;
18—23.

It was the prerogative of Christ to know beforehand what reception his gospel would meet with in the world; yet, notwithstanding this knowledge, which must have presented to him so unfavourable a result, he persevered in shedding his blood, that this gospel might be published. He cannot, therefore, be disappointed.

According to this parable, the three great obstacles to the effectual progress of the word in the hearts of those that hear it, are,—superficial knowledge, and imperfect religious impressions,—attachment to the world,—and the temptation of Satan, described to us by the simile of the seed sown on rocky places, among thorns, and by the way-side; while integrity of mind, truly desiring to imbibe and improve under the word, is the good ground, which, when the seed of the word is cast in, bringeth forth a blessed crop, though different in measure, according to the quality of the soil.

Let me, then, faithfully examine myself, that I may know to which class of hearers I belong. It is an awful thought, that, according to this parable, three parts out of four of those who hear the gospel, are likely to perish. How painful, that the remedy which

Infinite Wisdom has provided, should so awfully fail of success, through the unpardonable neglect of those to whom it is presented! O Lord, grant that thy word may take deep root in my heart, that in time of temptation or persecution I may not fall away. May I also be preserved from that inordinate attachment to the present world, by which thy word in so many is choked or become unfruitful; and, finally, let not Satan and my other spiritual enemies, who are watching to remove every serious impression from my mind, prevail against me. But may I be enabled to bring forth fruit a hundred-fold.

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FEBRUARY 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xiii.
24—30.

This parable, like the preceding one, contains this awful prediction, that the visible church shall be infested with false and injurious professors. The answer which our Lord gives to the proposal for plucking up the tares, renders it wonderful that men have not been taught that persecution is forbidden. But antichrist goes back to the dispensation of Moses for authority to persecute, disregarding the New Testament injunctions, by which all penal laws in the church have been abolished. Moses had used his power as a civil officer to punish offences against the Jewish theocracy, and, therefore, although Christ had said,—“Let both grow together until the harvest,” the followers of antichrist resolved to pluck up what they thought the tares; and thus fell into the very error which Christ had guarded against,—“lest ye root up the wheat with them.”

The innumerable evils which have arisen from the spirit of persecution, have, in some degree, produced its cure; but there is still, in almost all denomina-

tions, a disposition to make a difference of opinion the ground of pains and penalties, even where there is the highest confidence, that the party to be thus visited is conscientious and truly devoted to God. Still, let us bless God that the visible church, in this respect, is in an improved state. It is a pleasing indication, that we approach those halcyon days in which Christians shall be all one in Christ Jesus.

However mournful it may be, that there should be so many tares among the wheat, the hour is coming when the Judge shall command his angels to gather out the tares, and bind them in bundles, that they may be burned. O Lord, grant that I may be bound up in the bundle of life, and gathered into thy garner, in that separating day.



FEBRUARY 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xiii. 18—21.

By the first of these parables we are taught, that the kingdom of Christ in its rise would be very small, but that in it should be found multitudes of all nations. The event fully answered the prediction: for, before the decease of all the apostles, christian churches were planted all over the then known world. But this parable may have another meaning, and may signify the kingdom of God which is within us; it will be equally just in this application, for growth in grace is essential to the existence of this kingdom within us. The apostles themselves were striking examples of the weakness of the Divine principle, on its first implantation, and of the vigorous growth to which it attained as exhibited in their glorious lives and deaths. So in its nature is it in all sincere Christians: they are first babes, then young men, and then fathers in Christ.

Let us never be discouraged, then, if a christian

effort to spread the gospel be small and feeble in its commencement; but let us consider, that, according to the parable of the leaven, it is of the nature of christian principles to diffuse themselves. Religion seldom enters a family, or a town, but, if the leaven be vigorous, it sooner or later has a happy spread. The leaven may have lost its vigour, as the salt its savour, and then, for all the purposes of diffusion, it will be useless, and fit only to be trodden under foot; but let a good man, full of holy principles, be placed in a family, or in a town, and you will soon see the leaven begin to work. In this way the kingdom of Christ is tending towards a universal dissemination: the leaven is almost every where in ferment, and the earth begins to feel, to her extreme borders, the happy influence of christian principles. O blessed consummation! O glorious hour! Lord, hasten its annunciation;—"All creation travails, groans, and bids thee come."

But, as the leaven of the gospel shall leaven the whole earth, so shall the Divine principle reign through righteousness unto eternal life. How welcome this hope to the Christian, mourning over his awful deficiencies, and his no less awful departures from the standard of perfection; groaning under the weight of a body of corruption! Blessed be God, that sorrow and sighing shall flee away; thrice blessed be His name, that the time fast approaches, when we shall sin no more, but shall be capacitated to give our whole souls to Him who died for us, and rose again.

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FEBRUARY 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xiii.

44—46.

The truths taught us in these parables cannot be too often remembered,—that the gospel is the

richest of all treasures, and that he who is obliged to part with all for it, is still an infinite gainer.

Christian truth enriches the possessor by implanting those preserving, dignified, and immortal principles which are at once the marks of the person's high calling, of his holy nature, and of the glorious destiny which awaits him among the sons and heirs of God. But he who has found this treasure, is not only himself enriched, he enriches his children, his friends, his neighbours, the present age, and perhaps posterity too. Yea, further, the riches of Christ are said to be unsearchable, always in a state of expenditure, but for ever inexhaustible.

We are ready to pity those who suffer losses for Christ, and we feel a right, no doubt; but let us never suppose that any one loses by his attachment to the Saviour. Such persons not only enjoy heaven in common with their fellow-christians, but every item of loss and suffering will meet with its own special remuneration in heaven. God is not unfaithful to forget the labours or sufferings of his people.

But the blessings of the gospel kingdom are here represented as hidden, and requiring to be sought for:—hidden “from the wise and prudent,” from those whose pride of birth, or of talent, or whose love of the world, too often improperly called prudence, prevents them from perceiving the value of what they ruinously neglect. To obtain that which lies buried in the earth, labour is required; and to obtain pearls, a painful and perilous immersion in the sea; and these are the similes by which we are stimulated by our Lord to seek those treasures which are contained in the everlasting gospel.

FEBRUARY 17.

Scripture selected for the day. — Matthew, xviii.
23—35.

An implacable disposition is not only condemned by the Almighty, always offensive to him, and

destructive to the peace of him who feels it, and of him who is its victim, but it would seem, from this parable, that its existence is incompatible with the hope of future forgiveness;—"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." "If ye, *from your hearts*, forgive not," as we find it in the *Evangelist Matthew*.

A servant owed his master ten thousand talents of silver. To enforce payment, the master directed the servant's whole property, as well as himself and family, to be sold. The debtor fell at the feet of his master, and begged for the exercise of patience towards him. The master relented, and forgave him the whole debt. This man, though he had so much forgiven, on going out from the presence of his compassionate and generous master, found a fellow-servant who owed him only one hundred pence, seized him by the throat, and, disregarding his intreaties, hurried him to prison, resolving to keep him there till he should pay the debt. The master, as soon as he heard of this cruelty, seized the offender, and delivered him to the tormentors, after addressing to him this cutting interrogation;—"O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

And can I, after such a forcible appeal as this, ungenerously retain anger in my breast against an offending fellow-creature? Can I, while indulging the hope, that God, my heavenly Father, has forgiven me millions of the greatest and most aggravated offences, and will not bring them into judgment, nor remember them any more for ever, can I indulge an unforgiving or revengeful temper towards my fellow-creature, or fellow-christian?—God forbid. Let me not, O Lord, by any subterfuge, deceive myself herein; may I freely and fully forgive, as thou dost, and not, while I profess to discard revenge still retain a fretting remembrance of the injury. Yea,

O Lord, may I so love my enemies as to pity them, to pray for them, and, if they be hungry, to feed them, if thirsty, to give them drink. Herein I shall have a rich reward, in that I shall be permitted to resemble my heavenly Father, who causes the refreshing showers to descend on the fields, not only of the just, but of the unjust; not only of his friends, but of his enemies.

FEBRUARY 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xxii.
11—14.

In this parable our Lord draws the attention of his hearers to the melancholy fact, that the gospel would be despised by some, while others would be found to be essentially deficient in their christian profession. The particular circumstances in this parable are these:—A king gave a marriage-feast in honour of his son, and by repeated messengers invited many guests, but they made light of it, and went, one to his farm, and the other to his merchandise. The king then invited other guests who did not stand in the relation of friends to him, and thus the wedding was furnished with attendants. But, in passing round among the guests, speaking kind words to them, as is common among the eastern nations, the king saw a man present among them not properly arrayed for the occasion, and showing by this circumstance a want of respect for the person inviting him. The king inquired into the reason of such conduct, but the offender was speechless. He was then bound, by order of the king, and cast into outer darkness. It is very probable, that it was common among the Jews, for persons to attend at wedding-feasts dressed in new garments, and that this, as an honour done to the bridegroom, was invariably and tenaciously

insisted on, and the neglect considered as an unpardonable insult.

But our Lord, while he here entertains us with an interesting parable, calls us to a serious consideration of the most solemn truths. We see in the punishment of those who neglected the invitation to the feast, how dreadful will be our doom, if, through a sinful anxiety concerning our temporal interests, we turn a deaf ear to the invitations of the gospel, or if, placing ourselves among christians, we neglect that robe of righteousness which is necessary to our acceptance with God.

The gospel is here exhibited to us under the idea of a feast. O that we may come to it with a desire to honour the Founder, to enjoy his presence and that of his friends, and gladly partake of the blessings he has prepared! And may our desires herein be quickened by the remembrance, that many are called, but few chosen!

FEBRUARY 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xxv.
1--13.

Thus our Lord compares, in different parables, the dispensation of redemption to a marriage-feast. Of all the attendants upon the marriage-procession, he selects ten, five of whom, deserved the name of the wise, and the other five are denominated the foolish. The marriage takes place in the night, at the house of the bride's father, where the bridegroom is expected about midnight. These persons, here called virgins, having provided their lamps, wait together at some proper resting-place, expecting the arrival of the bridegroom and his friends, who may be supposed to be coming from an adjoining town. While the bridegroom delayed, all the ten virgins lay down to rest. But, about midnight, the bridegroom is seen at a distance with his friends, and it is

announced, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps; but the foolish (then too late) discovered their mistake, that they had forgotten to bring oil with them, and there being then no time to prepare, the wise virgins only were in circumstances to join the procession:—"And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and," as is the custom on these occasions, in order to keep out the crowd, "the door was shut." The other virgins came afterwards, but were denied entrance, as persons unknown to the master of the feast.

The application of this to the case of those who wear a christian profession, and pass for the friends of the Redeemer, is not difficult; and the pointed and most wholesome caution which it contains, to be ready for the coming of Christ, at death and judgment, has been felt by thousands. Do any ask, How may we know what is requisite in our preparation to meet the Great Judge? We may say, Three things are essential,—*repentance towards God,—faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,—and holiness of heart and life.* So necessary are these things, that the Holy Scriptures assure us there is no hope of being present at the marriage-feast without them:—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—"He that believeth not shall be condemned."—"Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

It is to be feared, that many are held fast in the delusion, that they are the friends of Christ, and are never undeceived till they find the door of mercy for ever closed against them.

FEBRUARY 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xxv.
14—30.

It cannot be doubted, that all the gifts we possess, whether natural or acquired, whether they relate to

mind or to fortune, are given in trust as talents, and that an account of the employment of these talents will be required of all.—The objects to be pursued in the discharge of our trust herein, are,—the honour of God, and the good of men.

Thou art blessed with large property; if this talent be well improved, it will give thee many facilities to gain conformity to the image of God, to promote his kingdom, and to do good to others,—the noblest objects to which an immortal intelligent agent can be called. But if this talent be expended in riot and luxury, in objects of tyranny, and in upholding the interests of impiety in the world, a terrible account awaits thee, when the Lord of this talent shall come and reckon with thee.

Or, thou art blessed with a large portion of knowledge, and hast an excellent understanding. These talents are given thee, that thou shouldest gain a happy acquaintance with Divine things, as well as be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, or, in other words, that thou shouldest instruct the ignorant, and lead men in the paths of righteousness. But, if these talents be misapplied, so that thy own powers and tempers are not improved, but rather corrupted hereby; and if by these perverted powers, others are injured, how wilt thou stand before His presence, who gave thee all these advantages?

The present and future happiness resulting from the improvement of the talents God has entrusted to us, is beyond measure great. How much better does *he* enjoy wealth, who makes it the vehicle of happiness to hundreds, than he who wastes it all on self-indulgence! The same may be said of knowledge, and of every other talent. But to the purest satisfaction on earth, in the case of the benevolent Christian, shall be added the joys of eternity. He shall *enter into the joy of his Lord*; he shall taste something of that joy which the Saviour possesses in looking over the myriads whom he has redeemed by his own blood, from every kingdom, and nation, and

tongue, under heaven:—"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things: *enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*"

He who does not improve the gifts of Providence, is said to hide his talent in the earth: a very proper comparison, for it does good to none; neither to himself nor to others. The charge brought against the master by the slothful servant is not only false, but, like all other excuses of the wicked, will end in their being condemned out of their own mouth: this man pronounced his own condemnation. From this parable we learn, that not only the openly profane will be condemned, but the unprofitable servant also;—"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

FEBRUARY 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xii. 16—21.

It is an awful proof of the depth of our fall from primitive perfection, that, with most men, the improvement and everlasting happiness of the soul are completely neglected. An entire absorption in the world is the common sin of mankind, who consider the enlargement of the mind itself of no further value than as it is connected with the interests of time, and the inferior part of our nature. Wise and sagacious to the last degree in pursuing present interests, and in this pursuit, patient of labour and anxiety, even to astonishment; they are destitute of every particle of foresight, and parsimonious beyond comparison, relative to the spiritual interests of the soul. Yet all this patient endurance of toil, all this devouring care, are expended upon an object never the same, always absent, and so precarious, that—

"The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to man's feeble hold
Of earthly bliss: it breaks at every breeze."

Mournful case! A soul, made to range through eternity, made to live for ever, clinging to a clod, or seeking annihilation! What folly, what desperation, is here! To what baneful influence are we to ascribe such an infatuation? To nothing more than to the indulgence of depraved passions, to the influence of worldly opinion and example, and to the stratagems of Satan,—these form a current which is carrying the victim to perdition; and often, while the victim himself is saying,—“Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thy rest in the creatures; eat, drink, and be merry;” a voice, stern and awful, is heard,—“Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.”

FEBRUARY 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xiii. 6—10.

We cannot doubt the truth of this sentiment,—God has an ear to hear, while I have a heart to pray; the shortest time may be long enough, and the most desperate case will be hopeful, if the heart be really prepared to seek for mercy. The desperateness of men's condition lies in the state of the heart, and not in the shortness of their time, not in the number of their sins, not in the deficiency of Divine mercy. Whether the dying trembling culprit will obtain a heart to seek mercy in a right manner, depends upon the sovereign will of an insulted God; here lies the awfulness of his case. The sentence may have gone forth,—“Behold, these three years I come seeking

fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down. Why cumbereth it the ground?" Some friendly voice, addressed to God in prayer, perhaps the voice of a parent, or of a minister, suspends the execution of the sentence:—"Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and manure it. And if it bear fruit, well; if not, then thou shalt cut it down." A kind of desperate proposal made by affection and piety, clinging to, and weeping over, a beloved object. How many times have the prayers of a mother, a father, a friend, a minister, averted the impending storm, and given a few more months or years to a thoughtless dissipated creature, whose crimes were ripening him for destruction! The intercessions of Christ protract the existence of a world already doomed to be burnt up.

O Lord, enable me to be faithful in judging of my own case. I have long sat under the sound of the gospel, and the means of culture have been long employed in my behalf. I sometimes fear I bear little or no fruit, or none to perfection; but, O spare the barren fig-tree, and when the hour of my removal shall arrive, may I not be cut down in wrath, but may my barrenness be forgiven, and the appearances of fruit be speedily matured, and ripen in eternity.

FEBRUARY 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xv. 11—24.

The conversion and salvation of one sinner excite more joy in heaven than all other events which ever take place on earth, except as they may be connected with the salvation of men. How different the feelings of earth and heaven on this subject! That which produces such joy in heaven, is met on earth with scorn and insult; and that which has power to move the whole earth, is the triumph of plans connected with human destruction.

The interesting parable before us relates the history of a profligate youth brought to repentance. After obtaining his fortune, he wanders from home, and wastes it in riotous living. Thus do men abuse Divine mercies, and devote their time, their strength, their faculties, to the service of the great destroyer. Reduced to want, the prodigal is driven to extremity. And thus God frequently afflicts men, in order to humble them, and bring them to themselves, that is, to know their state, and the ruin which must follow;—"I perish with hunger." Sinking almost in despair, the prodigal bethinks himself of his father's house, and of the happiness of those who are even servants there. When the sinner is thus awakened, he is drawn by the Divine Spirit to look towards an injured and forsaken, though merciful God; and he resolves to try the Divine goodness:—"I will arise, and go to my Father;" he not only resolves, but acts up to his resolution. When the returning prodigal was seen yet a great way off, but in the act of returning, the father's bowels yearn over him, and he runs to meet him, and falls on his neck and kisses him. How is the tender mercy of God here set forth! What encouragement to return, notwithstanding all that a guilty conscience and unbelief may suggest. The sinner brings with him a broken heart, a sense of his errors, and of his unworthiness; and the Father buries all in immediate, in everlasting oblivion. He puts on him the garment of salvation, the robe of righteousness, and all heaven rings with joy. A soul is rescued from ruin, made capable of happiness, and the Divine mercy is eminently glorified.

 FEBRUARY 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xvi. 19—31.

The lowest place on earth, with heaven to come, how superior to the highest place on earth, connected

with future death! And yet this obvious truth makes no more impression on men than it does on the brutes, unless the principle of faith be in exercise as it was in Moses, Hebrews, xi. 24, 25.

We learn from this parable, that a resting in outward mercies may be as certainly ruinous as open profligacy. No crime except that of being destitute of compassion, is even alluded to in this case; nor does the rich man appear to be condemned for this, but for not seeking a better portion than affluence and sumptuous fare.

We here also learn, that the sufferings of the wicked will be insupportable, and that they are without remedy and alleviation. This parable confutes all idea of purgatory; there is no way across the great gulph.—As Abraham consented not to an extraordinary commission to the rich man's relations on earth, to warn them lest they also came into that place of torment, so let no one expect an extraordinary and miraculous revelation, to effect his conversion, or the conversion of his friends.—Finally, if we would do spiritual good to our connexions, it must be done now,—very soon they will have passed beyond our reach.

Upon the whole, this is a most alarming representation of the state of the wicked in eternity. May I dread receiving my portion in this life, and be reconciled even to a state of suffering as that which is most safe, though not most pleasant, May I not be content with any earthly good, however great, but seek that inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

FEBRUARY 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xviii. 1—7.

“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint!” This is a maxim which our Lord here means to enforce. He does not intend by it any thing contrary

to another injunction,—“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit:” but he means, that we should always most anxiously cultivate the spirit of devotion, even to a holy importunity.

The reasons for this are most obvious: we are always prone to evil,—always surrounded with dangers,—always exposed to enemies,—and ever in want of Divine assistance.

But God is pleased with importunity in prayer: his people are represented as crying day and night unto him. Such importunity implies that we are in earnest; that we set a proper value upon spiritual mercies; and that we have a due reliance on the faithfulness of God, even when he appears to delay.

It has been remarked, that men, the most eminently useful, have been most eminent for the spirit of prayer. The Reformers and Puritans were bright examples.

If these things be so, how much shame I ought to take to myself, that I have been so remiss, so cold in prayer, and have exercised so little faith therein! No wonder that I have glorified God so little, and have enjoyed so few of the comforts of religion, since I have so awfully neglected my closet, and so wickedly slighted a throne of grace. O Lord, quicken me in this duty. May I know more of the worth of prayer; and may the Spirit of grace and supplication be poured out upon me: then I shall know that it is good for me to draw near to God. What need I have of the Divine mercy to pardon those sins which I have cherished even in my solemn addresses to God, and for my preference of human society before communion with Jehovah, my heavenly Father!

FEBRUARY 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xviii. 9—14.

“Thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in

the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This passage opens to us the true intent of this parable; the exact point of difference between these two worshippers lay in the frame of spirit with which they approached God: the one came to thank God for his superiority over others; the other stood afar off, perhaps at the threshold of the temple, as unworthy the place which God called his own house, and where pious men bowed before him. Full of conscious guilt, he could not lift his eyes unto heaven; as though he had said,—“I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thine.” Further, expressive of the anguish of his soul, his self-abhorrence, and deep alarm, he smites upon his breast, and cries out, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” This man went home justified, rather than the Pharisee.

The following reflections appear to be suggested by this parable:—

The Pharisee did not form a just estimate of his character; he would have found, if he had compared his heart and life with the Divine law, that he was a sinner, and that it was of the Lord's mercies that he was not consumed.

Religious pride is offensive at all times, but most detestable when it displays itself in approaches to God. The infinite difference between God and the worm man, between a holy God and a degraded rebel, will ever keep a true worshipper at the utmost distance from pride and impudence in his attempts to come before the Almighty.

It is only the humble and contrite who are capable of receiving Divine mercy. It is only in such a heart that the Divine principle can live and flourish.

Who is it that mourns for his sins with inward smart? The humble and the contrite. Who is it that looks to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin? The man oppressed with a sense of the greatness of his

transgressions? Who is it that adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things? Only the man whose soul, clothed in humility, is the habitation of God through the Spirit.

What is it that capacitates a person to join the songs of heaven, but humility? There is the most humbling recollection of a former state of guilt and misery.—“Unto him that washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto Him be glory.”

Pride ruined angels, has ruined the world, and in the very era of redemption excludes God from the heart, and the soul from heaven.

FEBRUARY 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, iv. 19—20.

It has been a favourite attempt with some persons, to prove that our Lord Jesus Christ did not promulgate those truths which have been denominated “the peculiar doctrines of the gospel;” but that he merely taught the truths of natural religion, adding to them those of the resurrection and a future state: and that his great work on earth was to teach a system of perfect morals. A little attention, however, will enable us to discern, that all the doctrines found in the epistles were first promulgated in our Lord’s ministry. It is true, that his ministry did not admit of any particular enlargement on these doctrines; the work of redemption, on which they are built, not being then accomplished. But we have exactly that notice of them which might reasonably be expected, as truths intended for future use, and as the foundation of an edifice then about to be erected.

The insinuation, then, that the first principles of the system of redemption are not to be found in our Lord’s discourses, is equally rash and presumptuous.

Can it be, that he who came from the bosom of the Father,—he who is himself the Corner-stone, yea, the Foundation, which God hath laid in Zion, should not have furnished those materials which the apostles as wise master builders used in the erection of the christian edifice? It cannot be. What the apostle Paul said for himself, all the apostles confirmed:—“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.”

O Lord, bestow upon me, seeing I can only be made wise to salvation by a revelation of thy will, an humble and teachable disposition; and so prepare my heart by thy Holy Spirit, that thy truth may dwell in me richly in all knowledge and spiritual understanding. O deliver me from pride, which scorns simplicity of mind, and the child-like disposition which thou as my Great Teacher requirest; and as “a new-born babe may I receive the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby.”

FEBRUARY 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, x. 30.

That our Lord Jesus taught the doctrine of his divinity, and that the apostles who wrote his life did so, are facts so manifest, that we are compelled to look for the cause of their denial in the stupendous and overwhelming nature of this doctrine rather than in any obscurity in the communications made to us on this subject. That the eternal Jehovah should have united himself to the human nature, though in a spotless form, and have become by substitution a crucified and immolated victim for the sins of worms, is a fact, every reference to which, places before us inaccessible heights, and unfathomable depths; and we are overwhelmed in the contemplation of the infinite condescension of the Almighty, and the

inconceivable turpitude of transgression. Solomon said, "Will God in very deed dwell with men?" With how much more astonishment and hesitation may we ask, But will God in very deed become incarnate for men, yea, for the rebellious? Wonder, O heavens! Be astonished, O earth!—"The Word [which was God] was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

We might be afraid of believing this awful truth from the mouth of man: but we must believe it when Christ himself plainly and unequivocally declares it:—"I and my Father are one." "Before Abraham was, I am." "O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee." "I will send the Comforter." "All things that the Father hath are mine." "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" "All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The testimony of the sacred historians is equally decisive:—"She shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us." "The Word was God." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "All things were made by him."

O my soul, however awful, however astonishing this truth, it becomes thee to bow before such testimony. But how shall my love to such a condescending God, how shall my devotion and astonishment, reach the elevation of a truth so stupendous! How sure the promises,—how tremendously awful the threatenings,—thus sealed and ratified by blood Divine!

FEBRUARY 29.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xxvi. 28.

In the other parts of the New Testament this doctrine is abundantly taught; but it may be asked, How far did Jesus Christ, before his death, promulgate the doctrine of his being a vicarious Sacrifice? By this term is meant, that Jesus Christ was offered up a Victim to penal justice; that the sins of men were laid upon him; and that he bore, as the Substitute for sinners, such punishment as an offended Governor and Legislator thought fit to afflict; and that by these sufferings, ending in the pouring out of his blood and in his death, an adequate compensation to the pure principles of the Divine nature and government has been made for the guilt of sinners, so as to open a way, on the application of the repenting sinner, for his reconciliation to God. This expresses the meaning of the word at-one-ment. The question then is, Are we to understand, from the discourses of Christ, that his death was merely that of a martyr, or that of a victim offered on the altar of God's justice, to open a way for the pardon of sin?—"The Son of man gave his life a ransom for many." "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

These passages may surely suffice to show, that this most important doctrine occupied just that place in our Lord's ministry which we should have expected.

O wonderful mercy! O astonishing condescension! He took our degraded nature, — suffered, — died, and submitted to be treated as a culprit, both by heaven and earth.

"With joy, - with grief, that healing hand I see;
 Ah, too conspicuous! it is fix'd on high:
 On high! What means my frenzy? I blaspheme;
 Alas, how low! how far beneath the skies!
 The skies it form'd; and now it bleeds for me,—
 But bleeds the balm I want, yet still it bleeds;
 Draw the dire steel, - ah, no!—the dreadful blessing,
 What heart, or can sustain, or dares forego?
 There hangs all human hope: that nail supports
 The falling universe: that gone, we drop:
 Horror receives us, and the dismal wish
 Creation had been smother'd in her birth,—
 Darkness his curtain, and his bed the dust;
 When stars and sun are dust beneath his throne!
 In heav'n itself can such indulgence dwell?
 O what a groan was there! A groan not his,
 He seiz'd our dreadful right; the load sustain'd;
 And heav'd the mountain from a guilty world.
 A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.
 Sensations new in angels' bosoms rise,
 Suspend their song; and make a pause in bliss."

 MARCH I.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, i. 1--15.

He is an incompetent legislator and governor, who, according to the utmost extent of his capacity, does not, by the laws and by his influence, secure the very best possible results in his government. The Divine foreknowledge, all admit; but some persons seem unwilling that God should fore-appoint. But why? Are not his eternal arrangements better than chance?—He has predestinated believers to be conformed to the image of his Son; and with regard to unbelievers, his arrangements do not frustrate their happiness. On the contrary, they secure as much good, and prevent as much evil, as possible, in a world devoted, by its crimes, to destruction. It should, therefore, be matter of joy, that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," and should excite us to join in adding, "to whom be glory for ever. Amen."