should be permitted to prevail, through so many ages, over the whole world, is a mystery so profound as to baffle all our conjectures.

It is true, there is in the Divine proceedings, and particularly in the Christian dispensation, a process of instruction going forward, to which the enemies of the Almighty are compelled materially to contribute; and it is possible that this interruption to the progress of Christianity may be designed to make the grace of God in the salvation of man more illustrious, and the final conquests and universal triumphs of the gospel, through many long ages, the more glorious. Then, in the universal extension of moral light, heavenly peace, and evangelical righteousness,—when the long night which has covered the whole world shall be turned into universal day,—when anarchy, war, devastation, and death, shall give place to order, peace, and mental culture, and happy existence; and when, instead of a state of dreadful moral disorganization and corruption, the whole race of man shall be recovered to the image of the Deity, then will be manifested the sublime nature of those triumphs which the Great Deliverer of mankind will have accomplished, in spite of the mightiest efforts of the powers of darkness. Then "there shall be no more curse, no more death. The former things shall be passed away. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

JULY 1.

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

In nothing does the stupidity of mankind more appear than in the worship of idols. When we see a man, endued with reason, prostrating himself before

a log of wood, carved perhaps into the very image of sin itself, paying it Divine honours, singing hymns in its praise, attributing to it the creation of the world; —when we observe him asking questions of the senseless block, leading his children to its worship, consoling himself with an idea of its favour, and ascribing to it wisdom, and honour, and power, and glory: when we realize in such a scene the worship of millions upon millions of our fellow-creatures, how ashamed we are of our species! But, if we see these idolators sacrificing themselves, their widows, their children, in rivers, under cars, in fires, and by other tortures, in honour of such images, how anxious we feel that they should come to the knowledge of this grand and simple truth,—"God is love!"

He is seen to be so,—first, in the work of creation. None of all these splendid works have been made merely for the purpose of display: upon the sun, the most glorious of the Divine works, depend the cheering light, the fruitful seasons, and every thing precious to man; the birds of sweetest note, and the flowers of greatest beauty, afford to man the highest delight, while they set forth the Divine power and wisdom.—2. The whole work of Providence teaches us the same lesson: in watching over and feeding all these myriads, what proofs are afforded, that God is Love! This is the language of every event which happens, but especially of those events which regard the good of the church.—3. But in the gift of Christ, and of salvation by him, how does this perfection of Jehovah shine forth! "Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." It was love that induced a person, during the reign of Robespiere, *to personate his brother* when to be arraigned before the revolutionary tribunal; but "God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners*, (*enemies*,) Christ died for us."—4. In the gift of Divine Revelation, the same attribute is displayed. To lead to God, the

Source of happiness, to cure the evils of the mind, to cheer in affliction, and to comfort in death,—these are the substantial blessings resulting to us from this blessed gift.—5. In the future state, God will display his love in conferring everlasting happiness upon all the redeemed: there millions of proofs of this truth will crowd upon the attention of the saints; love to order, to virtue, to justice, to the martyrs, will be perfectly legible there.

If God be Love, then every doctrine of his word, and every event of his providence, must be consistent with this view of his nature. Fear not, tried Christian, he who directs the whirlwind and the storm, is the God of love.

JULY 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, xv. 1—19.

The Apostle Paul, in his conversion and christian character, affords a noble demonstration of the truth and excellency of the christian religion. Holding up this distinguished saint, we might say,—

> "Jehovah here resolved to show
> What his almighty grace could do."

1. Before his conversion, the apostle was full of the pride of descent, so that he considered himself as having a pre-eminent right to glory in the flesh; but afterwards he says,—What, then, are we Jews better than the Gentiles? No, in no wise; for we have before proved that all are under sin.—2. His blind attachment to the traditions of his forefathers was so eradicated, that he says,—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."—3. That con-

fidence in his religious attainments which once led him to think that he was a perfect character, and had no sin, was exchanged for the most abasing sense of his own imperfections, and the most thorough renunciation of all confidence in his own righteousness;—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—4. Before his conversion, this person seemed to live to destroy the church of Christ; but see the change:—"I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. I was, before, a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." He not only now preached the faith which once he destroyed, but he cherished the christian church as a nursing father: he thus addressed the Philippians,—"My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."—5. His love to the Lord Jesus, against whom he once thought he ought to do many things, was so great, that he declared his readiness not only to suffer, but to die, for the name of Christ; and death itself he considered as gain, since it would introduce him into the presence of Christ, which was far better than any possible degree of happiness to be found in this world.

But it is not only in the happy contrast between Saul of Tarsus, and Paul the Apostle, that we behold the blessed effects of the christian religion, but in that elevation of character to which Christianity raised him.—No man ever showed a greater contempt of mere earthly distinctions than the apostle; no man ever carried the christian temper further; no man ever obtained a nearer assimilation to his Redeemer; none ever displayed a more diffused benevolence: no man tasted of christian joy to a higher degree; and no man conquered the last enemy more triumphantly than the Apostle Paul.

Thus we see in the Apostle the greatest advance ever made by man towards human, rather towards christian perfection; made by one who had been a poor earth-worm, a blasphemer, a persecutor, in-

jurious, the chief of sinners. To what are we to attribute so Divine a change? Let the apostle himself answer,—"By the grace of God, I am what I am."

JULY 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, ii.

It is said of Job, that he was the richest man in all the east; but he was more rich in personal excellence than in worldly affluence: he was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: he was so great a benefactor, that, when the eye saw him, it blessed him. When affluence and benevolence of disposition thus meet in the same individual, they raise him to great eminence. Now this is what the apostle means of the Almighty, when he says,—"He is rich in mercy."

Of all the descriptions of the Divine Being given in scripture, this may well excite our profoundest attention, for we are in the very circumstances to need these riches of mercy, or, as the Psalmist calls them,—"the multitude of God's tender mercies:" we are both guilty and miserable, and must, therefore, be altogether indebted to mercy.—1. The Divine mercy was displayed in the promise, that a Saviour should come.—2. But this disposition to bestow mercy was more strikingly expressed in the gift of a Saviour, while every gracious word and action, and every miracle of Christ, were intended to show us the Father.—3. The Almighty has shown himself rich in mercy, in establishing a gospel ministry on earth, as that ministry was expressly intended to call men to partake of mercy, and is to be extended to the whole earth.—4. In the pardon of David, of Manasseh, of Magdalen, of the thief, of Jerusalem sinners, of Paul, and of a long list of the most profligate of men, how true does it appear, that God is

rich in mercy! — 5. This mercy is also seen in the pardon of numerous and aggravated crimes; in pardoning at the latest hour of life; and in resolving to cast out none that come for mercy. — 6. Finally, in completely saving and landing in heaven so large a portion of the human race, who were once all lost, how is this mercy magnified!

But this mercy flows only through Jesus Christ: this is the appointed channel. We must plead in Christ's name, and rely for the obtaining of it upon the merits of his death.

No argument can be drawn hence in favour of the presumptuous. Divine mercy, though free, visits only the penitent, and heals only the broken-hearted: this "mercy is on them that fear him, on them that hope in his mercy." Those who seek mercy on the ground of meritorious works, and penances, will not obtain it; for it is given only to those who are sensible that "we are all as a polluted thing, and like a rejected garment, are all our righteous deeds."—*Lowth's Isaiah.*

JULY 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—Zechariah, xiii.

Mankind in general appear to have had the idea, from the very earliest ages, that sin, in some sense or other, renders a person impure, and that purification from it is absolutely necessary. Though, in their animal sacrifices, the Hindoos have no idea of atonement or expiation, yet from their ablutions they expect exemption from guilt, and purification. Their sacred books teach this doctrine, and millions daily seek purification in the Ganges and other rivers.

Among the Jews, ceremonial purifications, intended to teach the evil of sin, and the necessity of purity in

men's approaches to God, were common. The priests washed before they entered upon their sacred work; for their accommodation, a molten sea was prepared, in which they bathed. All persons, before engaging in religious services, after touching unclean persons or things, or after recovery from the leprosy or other disorders, were to wash their clothes and bodies with water, in order to become clean.

What was thus typified in the Levitical law, is realized in the Christian dispensation:—"Ye are come to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." The unclean were to wash their garments. Christians are said to "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The bathings and washing of the body under the Old Testament law, were typical of the washing in the fountain opened by the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore those made perfect in heaven are represented as ascribing glory to the Lamb in these words;—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory."

All persons agree, that the words of the prophet refer to Christ, to the removal of guilt by the sacrifice of Christ. The death of Christ is here compared to a fountain; because its virtues reside in itself, and it continually preserves its efficacy. The ancient sacrifices were efficacious only as types; but he who washes in this fountain is perfected for ever; he is no more under the guilt of sin, but is freed from condemnation. There is indeed in the blood of atonement an unbounded efficacy; all sins, however aggravated, and however numerous, are hereby removed, so that the sinner who has bathed here, becomes "white as snow." It is an open fountain, open to all; not only to the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem, but to the whole Gentile world. It has been tried, and its virtues have been proved in every age of the church: hereby the load is removed from the conscience, and the sinner is freed from the terrors

of death and hell. Faith in the death of Christ cleanses the conscience from all "dead works," and bestows the peace of God which passeth all understanding. O that this may be to us "the precious blood of Christ." May we come to this fountain daily, and prevail on others to come, and prove its efficacy.

JULY 5.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, xi. 1—24.

An unawakened man never properly realizes the nature of Divine justice; and an awakened sinner never properly estimates the goodness of the Lord. Infinitude belongs to all the Divine perfections: the anger of the Almighty is therefore by the apostle here called "the severity of God." There is in God that which makes him to unbelievers "a consuming fire." It is called in scripture, anger, wrath, and vengeance. Arising out of the Divine purity and justice, it forms an unchangeable part of the nature of Jehovah; and it moves towards its objects with a force almighty, undeviating, and absolutely certain. It is a righteous indignation, infinitely removed from the nature of passion and anger in man; and is as necessary to the government of the world as love and mercy to the salvation of fallen men. Sinners are the objects of this anger:—"he is angry with the wicked every day." Nothing proves the dreadfully infatuating nature of sin more than the insensibility of men to this threatening and tremendous danger, presented to them in the doctrine of the Divine justice or severity.

But the other part of this passage presents for our meditation another perfection of the Divine nature,—infinite benevolence. Where there is no sin, there the cheering streams of his goodness flow without

interruption. But we are sinners, children of wrath, and under the sentence of condemnation,—how shall this goodness come to us? Nothing which has yet been discovered by man, unacquainted with revelation, touches this question; and therefore the apostle speaks of this as "a mystery hid in God." But, when he reveals his method of recovering man, then we perceive that the remedy has met the case: for instance, punishment was threatened;—the punishment has been borne;—the eternal principles of the law must be preserved;—and by these men must obtain eternal life:—"He that doeth these commandments shall live by them;" this indispensable condition of our salvation has been fully met in making believers the righteousness of God in Christ. The objects of mercy are depraved, and heaven is a place for spotless beings; this difficulty has been overcome by the gift of the Spirit, to restore to primitive perfection the human body and soul. Thus a way is opened for the free course of the Divine goodness, unobstructed by the indispensable claims of the Divine government; and it was to the devout contemplation of this most profound subject, that the apostle called the Ephesians, when he thus wrote to them,—"That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth; and may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." Behold, then, the goodness of God in pardoning the offender, in making him righteous, in giving him the blessed Spirit, in adopting him, enriching him with heavenly titles and privileges, and at last in glorifying the worm which he has delivered from the wrath to come. Various expressions of scripture relative to the Divine goodness may well excite our devout astonishment;—"The Lord's portion is his people." "I will never leave thee." "As a bridegroom rejoiceth in his bride, so shall thy God rejoice in thee."

Let us realize, then, in the severity of God, the extremity of our danger, and the folly of every con-

trivance to extricate us, except faith in Christ; and in this plan of mercy let us behold the wisdom as well as the benevolence of God, in thus making justice itself, which would have overwhelmed us, an auxiliary in promoting our blessedness.

JULY 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xlv.

"We saw his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."—The apostle here speaks of the Lord Jesus, as a surviving friend sometimes speaks of one deceased. How many endeared recollections of this kind must the apostles have had,—recollections of circumstances, conversations, and events, which made but little impression at the time! And how much must these things have become the subject of conversation among them after our Lord's removal! We beheld his glory, the glory of the Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us.—How full of grace!

There was, no doubt, something in the features of Christ, which indicated the fulness of grace which dwelt in him. Yet we may suppose, that there were also deep shades of sorrow in his countenance, as one who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows: the Prophet Isaiah alludes to this;—"His visage was marred more than any man."

Grace was so poured into his lips, that his hearers "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," and the officers sent to seize him, though men little capable of tender impressions, were so overpowered by the discourse he was delivering to their countrymen, that they were unable to execute their commission; and, coming back, said,—"Never man spake like this man." His sermon on the mount, his parable of the prodigal, his conversation with the

sisters of Lazarus, his last discourses to his disciples on the subject of leaving them, his prayer for his murderers, afford the most striking comment on the words,—"Grace is poured into thy lips."

But, what grace shone in his actions! Look at his tenderness towards the miserable objects in whose favour he exerted his Divine power. How he enters into the feelings of the sisters of Lazarus,—of the widow whose son he raised from the dead,—of the woman with the bloody issue,—of the centurion,—of the mothers who brought their children for his blessing,—of the thousands whom he fed by miracle lest they should faint in the way! What acts of grace he performed, in casting out evil spirits, in receiving sinners, in pardoning the sins of those who came to him for healing for the body! How full of grace in pitying the weaknesses of his followers,—in pardoning Peter, in the institution of the last supper, in a thousand other instances!

Such was the fulness of grace, oh, my soul, found in thy Redeemer! Well may he be considered as the "Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether Lovely." Well may we sing,—

> "All over glorious is my Lord;
> Must be belov'd, and yet ador'd:—
> His worth if all the nations knew,
> Sure the whole earth would love him too."

JULY 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, ix. 1—38.

In the history of this miracle we have a surprising and most disgusting view of the power of prejudice. This poor blind man displayed far more good sense than those who said to him,—"Thou wast altogether born in sin; and dost thou teach us?"

All men, being born in sin, are born blind:—"The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are spiritually discerned." This blindness relates particularly to a person's spiritual state. Unconverted persons, except when alarmed by some recent transgression, consider their spiritual state as nearly safe, or as easily made so. They do not see nor believe that their depravity goes so deep, or that their sins are so many or so heinous, as the convinced sinner sees his to be. A person of their class has no idea of any greater danger than what may be averted by an hour's repentance, or the reception of the sacrament. He sees no need of an atonement, repentance being deemed expiation sufficient to satisfy a merciful God; nor any beauty in Christ, that he should desire him. He professes to thank God for the good rules which Christ has given, and for the clear discoveries he has made of a resurrection; but he feels no interest in the peculiar office of Christ as a Propitiation for sin. He sees no need of a life of faith, nor does he comprehend what it can mean: it must be enthusiasm; and the idea of a sanctifier in the Holy Spirit is still farther from his comprehension: the heart, he believes, is good enough, if kept with a little care; and indeed, if the conduct be in some measure correct, he thinks it perfectly unreasonable to expect any thing more from man. The first thing done for such a man in his conversion, is, to open the eyes of his understanding:—he then begins to see the extent of the Divine law, and the number and aggravation of his sins; he perceives, also, the way of pardon and salvation; this leads to prayer, and to all the gradual advances in a life of faith and holiness, which terminate in preparation for heaven.

O Lord, I would adore thee, that, although I have made but small progress in the christian life, and have attained but little of that elevation of heart and exalted devotion to which some of thy servants have been raised, yet I hope I can say, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

JULY 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xxxiv.

The influence which men have over each other may be of great importance, when rightly directed. David's influence was very great, and, no doubt, it had a mighty effect on the state of Israel and Judah. In these words he invites men to come and taste of God's goodness:—he was not content that his friends should taste of the blessings distributed from the throne merely, for he knew that these were transient and uncertain: he therefore invited men to taste and see that the Lord was good.

God is essential Goodness:—this is seen in the works of creation and providence, but still more in redemption, and in a heaven full of the monuments of his grace.

But it is one thing to think, and to admit, that God is good, and another and a very different thing, to see it, and to taste it. For instance, a man may speak with some degree of interest about the goodness of God in forgiving the sins of men; but let this man be brought into trouble of conscience about his sins, let him feel their burden, and, under this sense of his guilt and misery, let him address himself to God in prayer, and persevere therein, pleading the merits of Christ, and the promises of mercy in him, till a sweet peace succeed the terrors of his mind: this man *tastes* that the Lord is good. It is easy for men, enjoying a state of constant affluence, to admit that God is good, and good to them: but it is persons fed in some measure like Elijah, to whom the "ravens brought bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening," who *taste* that God is good in his providential dealings. A Christian who has never yet been heavily afflicted, thinks that God is good; but, if he should be enabled to say, after a long series of personal or domestic trials, under

which he was ready to sink as in deep waters; — "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles;" he will then *taste* that the Lord is good.

How well such an one can adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say to those around him,—'Be encouraged from my example: I had heard he was good: I thought he must be so: but now I know it. O taste and see; make the experiment: creatures may have disappointed you, but the blessed God will not,—he cannot!'

JULY 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, i.

It may be considered as a strong argument for the truth of the scriptures, that they describe things a thousand years to come with as little hesitation, or fear of being confuted, as though the events were past.

This passage contains a representation of the coming of Christ to judgment, in reference to our interest in that event: — "Every eye shall see him." What millions of eyes will then be fixed on Christ; and the soul of every one in his eyes! To have seen him on earth, though the Man of sorrows, would have been the greatest of providential favours, if we had known him, at the same time, as "God manifest in the flesh." To have seen him feeding the five thousand, — stilling the tempest, — curing the man possessed with a legion of evil spirits, — raising Lazarus, — transfigured on the mount, — risen from the grave, — rising from the earth, with his hands over his disciples, blessing them, and thus ascending to heaven; — to have witnessed all these scenes, and to have known the end and design of all! ——

But we *shall* see him;—"Every eye shall see him." Those eyes which could not bear to see a saint, they shall see him; those eyes which flashed with rage against them, and fed with joy upon their suffering martyred bodies, they shall see him; eyes full of adultery, full of malignity, full of pride; these shall see him. The eyes of Judas, of Pilate, of Annas and Caiaphas, of those who said,—"Away with him; crucify him, crucify him;" of those who pierced him, and assisted in his crucifixion, and in the insults offered him there;—the eyes of all these shall see him. Those eyes which were never lifted up in prayer, from which the tears of godly sorrow never flowed, which never feasted on the Divine word, which never guided the possessor to his closet, nor to the house of God, and which have been only the instruments of sin,—these eyes shall see him:—"And all nations shall wail because of him." What distraction, what terror, is here! The cries of all Egypt, how piercing! But here collected nations; generation after generation, countless myriads, are wailing because of his dreaded, his piercing presence, and calling, in the last agonies of despair, for help from the rocks and mountains!

But how shall *I* appear? These eyes also shall see him.—Have I ever lifted a trembling eye to the throne of his grace? Have I ever called him mine, surrendered myself to him; given up my spirit to be saved by him in that awful day?—Have I ever felt the idea of his coming to be welcome? Is there any gratitude in my heart, that urges me to draw near to him, that I may "crown him Lord of all," and say,—

> "And blessings more than I can give,
> Be, Lord, for ever thine?"

Ah! false professor, how wilt thou bear to see a Saviour whose name has been on thy tongue, but never was music to thy heart? How wilt thou bear his sight, false apostate, when he fixes his eyes upon thee as a flame of fire, and brings home thy transgressions, and disowns thee for ever?

JULY 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, v.

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is no sentiment more decidedly fixed in the mind of a sincere Christian, than, that his salvation must be wholly ascribed to the unmerited favour of God, which is the meaning of the term "grace." That this feeling is right, will appear if we consider, —1. That the very design of saving fallen men originated entirely in the mere mercy of God. The news of it was announced without the intercessions of man, immediately upon the fall. —2. The means by which salvation was procured were all freely provided: the atonement made for sin was not the blood of the offender; but he who knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us; the righteousness by which sinners are justified was wrought out by Jesus Christ alone.—3. The Saviour does not find in the hearts of men a disposition to repent, and believe, and obey, already formed; this he has to create.—"He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance." Faith "is the gift of God." —Ephesians, ii. 8. The whole of religion in the mind consists of holy principles or graces implanted by the Spirit: —"We are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works." —5. And, to finish the whole, it is said,—"He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" hence the promises,—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:" "They shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of my hand." So that the top-stone of the spiritual building will be raised with shoutings of, Grace, grace, unto it.

In this doctrine are found the strongest grounds of consolation, and the greatest stimulus to diligence.

We may have "grace upon grace;" grace for every time of need, so that we may press on towards perfection, and set no limits to our exertions.

How low is man sunk, that he is unable to rise, unable to gain the shore without special assistance! "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." The whole glory of our salvation is to be ascribed to the grace of the Father, the merits of the Son, the influences of the Holy Spirit; and the sinner, for ever humbled, will be filled with everlasting astonishment and gratitude for what God has done for him: — "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name, be all the glory." O how humble and grateful should men be, who derive their all from the grace of a deeply injured Sovereign, and which grace is about to elevate them to sit in heavenly places as the sons and heirs of God!

JULY 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—2 Corinthians, vi.

What a most interesting picture of the life and ministry of the first christian preachers is presented here! The apostle endeavours to excite attention to the blessings which result from the gospel ministry: —"It makes many rich." It leads a person to the possession of blessings which the scriptures call "the true riches," "durable riches," and "unsearchable riches." These terms will appear to be justified, if we consider,—1. That the gospel tends to make men rich, by taking them out of a state of poverty and ruin. When the prodigal came to himself, he said,—"I perish with hunger." A state of sin is a state of disgrace, of wretchedness, and of ruin, increasing in magnitude every day.—2. The gospel tends to make men rich, by removing the dispositions which lead to

ruin: anger often leads to murder; pride, to thefts and poverty; lust, to jealousy, insanity, murder, and self-destruction, as well as to excesses of different kinds, leading to poverty, disease, and death.—"But destruction stops not here; sin kills beyond the tomb." In removing the power of these sins, therefore, the enriching nature of the gospel appears most distinctly.—3. The gospel makes men rich, by bestowing upon them a Saviour, with all the blessings of his salvation, pardon, peace, righteousness, and eternal life. This Saviour is called an unspeakable Gift, the Pearl of great Price, the Desire of all nations.—4. The gospel makes men rich, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who fits them for their future inheritance. How shall we be prepared for that place where the seraphim cry, day and night,—"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" How shall we dwell with God, who dwells in that light which is inaccessible! A man in mean attire would be confounded, if it were said, I am come to take you to the king; and you are to live always in his presence. But how much more unprepared are we for the presence of the King of kings! Who shall form us, fallen as we are, for a state of perfect purity, light, and happiness? The Holy Spirit, given by the ministration of the gospel, makes the sinner "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."—5. But, as though this were not enough, the gospel makes a man rich, by giving him God for his Portion. Here is a bound beyond which we can make no progress: this blessing comprises all we can want here and hereafter. The Almighty can give no higher blessing than himself; and he says to every Christian, as he said to Abraham,—"I am thy exceeding great Reward."

To become possessed of these riches, however, the gospel must be cordially received, believed, and obeyed. Am I thus enriched? Have I really embraced the gospel so as to love it, and that Saviour whom it reveals? If I have, then I need not envy the most affluent, the most exalted, if ignorant of

these spiritual riches; but may say to them, with a heart full of humble gratitude,—

> "Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,—
> And my Redeemer's mine."

JULY 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xiv. 53—72.

It is the object of Christianity to restore man to the image and enjoyment of God; but in some men the influence of religion produces higher degrees of excellence than in others; so that we have in the church eminent saints, and others who come far short of their high calling. Of the latter, the number far exceeds the former; for but little of the sterling excellence of the gospel is to be seen, except where it takes possession of the whole heart, and as men drink deep of these waters which spring up into everlasting life. Others, like falling Peter, follow the Lord Jesus, but follow him afar off, too far to gain the full benefit of his protection and the influence of his example and presence.

To follow the Lord fully, is to have an entire delight in him; to trust him wholly, and to cleave to him in all his ways; the consequences of which will be, a serene frame, gracious and profitable conversation, comfort in affliction, and, in the last scenes of life, bright evidences of interest in the favour of the Almighty through the merits of Christ.

To follow the Lord afar off, is to be cold in our affections, to give way to easily besetting sins, to indulge in worldly mindedness, to mix much with the world, and to be dead and cold in duty, especially in secret duties. The consequences will be a want of happiness: — "If ye walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you." "He gave them their desires, but he sent leanness into their souls." Such persons are

dragged by conscience into duties; but find no Saviour there, no sweetness in the promises, no real communion with God. They frequently fall into sin, wound the conscience, feel the deepest sense of shame, are afraid of the presence of a man eminently devoted to God, dishonour the name of Jesus, and bring heavy guilt upon their minds. If they fall into afflictions, those afflictions are received with bitterness of spirit, the whole weight of them is felt, the spirit is not softened under them, nor are they sanctified. And when such persons come to leave the world, they are filled with doubts; they feel the world clinging closely to their hearts; they must be torn from it; death comes as an armed foe; they fear, God is not pacified; they have little hold of the promises and invitations; they are ready to suspect their former impressions; and their backslidings appear as proofs of their being merely hypocrites.

How awful is such a case! May we not be found following Christ afar off, but maintaining a constant watchfulness and self-denial; choosing gracious companions; excellent books, especially the Bible; living near to God in the closet; and, pressing towards the mark of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus, may we at length receive a full reward, an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Saviour!

JULY 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xii. 1—17.

The Apostle Paul had, no doubt, been present at the Grecian games; he here compares the christian life to what he had seen there. The parallel will hold good in several respects; racers of each class kept the body disciplined; the distance they ran was measured; both were surrounded by an immense

crowd of spectators, and both were roused to the highest ardour by their ideas of the value of the prize. In running the christian race, — 1. Every weight is to be laid aside. Some professing Christians are so overloaded with worldly cares, and others so oppressed with fears, that, instead of making rapid advances towards christian perfection, they linger on the road, and stumble at every difficulty and opposition they meet with. — 2. Every easily besetting sin is also to be laid aside. This constitutional sin is to many a sad hinderance: it may not reign, but it besets and ensnares the Christian, darkens his evidences, and makes him weak and feeble, so that his fervour of mind is damped, and his prayers are hindered. — 3. We are to run with patience; and, as the christian racer is in pursuit of an invisible prize, he has need of *much* patience, that, after he has done the will of God, he may possess the promises. — 4. He is to look to Jesus, as the inestimable Prize set before him, (to obtain which, the Apostle Paul suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dross, that he might win Christ and be found in him,) and as having successfully won the race, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. — 5. Nor is he to lose sight of the cloud of witnesses with which he is surrounded. The number of spectators at the Grecian games was so great, that, on one occasion, it is said, their shouts rent the air, and caused the birds to fall down dead. This is the grand simile which the apostle lays hold of; as though he had said, Behold, christian combatant, angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and an innumerable company of spectators, bend their views downward, while all the saints on earth join to watch thy progress. Those below are bearing thee up by their prayers to the throne prepared for thee: and those above stand ready to lead thee into the presence of Jesus, and congratulate thee on thy success; he will put the crown of righteousness on thy head, and the palm of victory into thy hand.

JULY 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, ix. 11—28.

The doctrine of scripture respecting man, is, that he is in a state of captivity, held fast by the most powerful enemies:—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." "I will redeem them from death." "God will redeem my soul from the grave."

The Divine word thus points our attention to him who is the Redeemer:—"Christ by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The Prophet Jeremiah says,—"Their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is his name."

We also learn from the same volume, what was the price given for our redemption:—"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

Lastly, we are taught in the scriptures, that men thus redeemed, are the property of the Redeemer. Under the law, the thing redeemed became a purchased possession: believers are therefore said to be redeemed to God; and the apostle says,—"Ye are not your own."

But it is an *eternal* redemption: the Christian is for ever redeemed from the curse of the law, from all iniquity, from this present evil world, from "the hand of the terrible," from death and the grave; hence the day of the resurrection is called "the day of redemption," because then the whole redeemed man will be fully emancipated, and be for ever given to Christ the Redeemer.

What obligations are we laid under to the Re-

deemer! Consider the state of captivity in which we were held,— the price of our ransom,— the dignity of our Redeemer, and the depth of his sufferings,— the elevation to which we are raised,— and the eternal duration of these mercies of our redemption. We have heard of Moravian Missionaries selling themselves into slavery, that they might instruct and save the slaves; but what parallel does this bear to the case thus mentioned by the apostle, — "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor!" As a Jew possessed and dwelt upon the land which he had redeemed, so God says,—"I will dwell in them, and walk in them; the Lord's portion is his people." All this blessedness is to have an eternal duration. Are we not bound, then, to give our whole selves to the Redeemer? —

"Blest Jesus, take us for thine own,
For we are doubly thine."

JULY 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Titus, ii.

This glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in judgment is here spoken of by the apostle, as "a blessed hope;" and it is a blessed hope, because in it is comprised an eternal exemption from sin, death, and all possible natural and moral evils, and the endless enjoyment of a state of moral perfection and boundless happiness. On these and other accounts, true Christians are represented as looking for these events, not with the dread of the prisoner looking for the judge of assize, but as the Jew looking for the new moon, and as the watchman looking for the morning.

He who is thus looking for the second coming of Christ, must be supposed to possess a comfortable hope of being found in Christ; to be dead, in some happy measure, to the cares, pleasures, and spirit, of

the world; to have a conscience void of offence; to possess a devotional frame; to be delivered from the prevailing fear of death; and to be longing for perfection in holiness. How blessed is the man who can welcome Christ in his robes of judgment, and say,—"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" who can look upwards with a cheerful countenance to the descending Judge, and say,—"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him; he will save us!" To what a happiness is such a Christian raised,—while to the wicked it will be "a fearful looking for of judgment;" for they will call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!

What a glorious gospel, that gives us a hope which is as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast; that removes the terror of judgment itself; and makes the Christian not only look for, but hasten to, these awful scenes, as a racer to the prize set before him, though "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and though the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up."

JULY 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, iii.

In the fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth chapters of this Epistle, the Apostle makes a most interesting comparison between Aaron and Christ in the office of High-Priest. Aaron was descended from the seed of Abraham; but Christ was without descent.—2. Both Aaron and Christ received their appointments from God; but the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, was superior to Aaron, in that he was faithful as a Son over his own house.—3. Aaron was to be holy; still, he came so far short,

that he had to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins; but Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. — 4. Aaron was consecrated in a solemn manner to his work; but Christ was anointed to his office by the influences of the Holy Spirit poured upon him without measure. — 5. Aaron went into the most holy place; so Christ is gone into the presence of God for us. The high-priest wore a breast-plate, having engraven on it the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; the Lord Jesus bears his whole church on his heart. — 6. The high-priest was to be constantly present before God at the tabernacle; our High-Priest has for ever sat down at the right hand of God. — 7. The high-priest slew other victims; Christ offered up himself, through the Eternal Spirit, without spot to God. — 8. Aaron offered the incense and made intercession for the people; Christ presents the incense of his own merits. — 9. It was necessary that the high-priest should be capable of "having compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" the Apostle Paul says,— "We have not a High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are."— 10. The high-priest himself being an imperfect being, and the sacrifices offered being merely typical, there was a necessity that these sacrifices should be offered daily; but Christ by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. — 11. The high-priest entered into the holy place with the blood of others; but Christ entered into the holy place with his own blood. — 12. The first testament was dedicated with blood; the blood of Christ ratifies the new covenant, and is sprinkled also upon the consciences of all believers. — 13. The priesthood of Aaron changed from hand to hand; — "but this Man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

The inferences which the apostle draws from these comparisons, are, — "Let us hold fast our profession:" "Let us come boldly to the throne of

grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

JULY 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, lxiv.

That the Almighty should take sinners of the race of Adam, and adopt them as his children, forms one of those wonders which would confound our belief, were they not revealed in the words of truth. Here we are informed, that God is the Father of every real Christian: a wise Father, so wise as never to err, but to comprehend at once the whole disposition of every child, to know all its wants and all its weaknesses, and to foresee all that it will need in every circumstance of its future history: a kind Father, so kind as to withhold no good thing from them that love him, as to omit nothing which can completely enrich the child, and make it happy: an almighty Father, who can always protect and always deliver; and can meet every possible vicissitude.

1. He becomes our Divine Teacher:—"All thy children shall be taught of God." He makes them all wise unto salvation; and, where circumstances require it, he makes them eminently wise. — 2. He protects them from their own rashness and inexperience, from all seducers, from all secret and open enemies. — 3. He corrects them:—"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. He corrects them, that he may make them wise, keep them humble, and render them partakers of the Divine nature. — 4. He commiserates them in all their sorrows; is touched with the feeling of their infirmities; pardons them daily; and heals their backslidings. — 5. He expends much upon them. The Divine word, which required thou-

sands of years to finish, was prepared to make them perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work. He gave for their ransom the blood, the precious blood of Christ. He bestows upon them the influences of his Spirit, that he may adorn them with his graces, and qualify them for the work of time and eternity; and, finally, he lays up for them a crown and kingdom in heaven.

Such is God, as our heavenly Father. How important, honourable, and advantageous, then, is this connexion, to which we are introduced by the Lord Jesus Christ:—"No man cometh to the Father, but by me." Let us beware of grieving such a Parent, by indulging evil dispositions, or by forming connexions dishonourable to him as our Father. Let us be of good cheer, for our Father cannot die: we cannot want any good thing; we cannot perish. How miserable the man that has no friend, no protector, no comforter, no hope, in God!

JULY 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Jeremiah, xviii.

The deceitfulness of the heart discovers itself in two ways:—1. In self-deception; and, 2dly, In deceiving others. An unconverted man is deceived respecting his real character: he will have it, that his heart is good, though his life may be bad. He does not make this acknowledgment, however, from a sorrowful sense of the evil of his conduct, which he would do if his heart were good. He is deceived too respecting his sins, which he never admits to be so great or so aggravated as the scriptures assure him they are; and as to his state, he never can be persuaded that he is any real danger, though already condemned. He believes Satan rather than God;—

"Ye shall not surely die:" for he says,—"I shall have peace, though I go on in the imagination of my heart." He is deceived respecting God; he thinks that God is just such a one as himself. He is further deceived, in the way of salvation; for he imagines that his good works will please God, and make atonement for his sin. He does not therefore perceive the necessity of faith in Christ:—"a deceived heart hath turned him aside." Finally, he feedeth on ashes; he is deluded by the deceitfulness of sin, and knows not that a creature constituted like himself may as well expect health from poison, as happiness from sin and rebellion.

The heart is desperately wicked. This is shown in men's pursuing a course of sin, though it is daily destroying both body and soul; in their sinning against much light, against many inward and friendly warnings, against the evidence of universal experience that the way of transgressors is hard. When a public transgressor is executed, few take warning: the very spectacle is turned into a piece of amusement. The death of a sinner, under the evident frowns of God, strikes no terror. Men indeed seem to have come to the resolution of making a desperate venture. The way of safety is accessible;—but, cost what it will, and let the consequences be what they may, men are bent on trying the downward road. If I am lost, I am lost; but I will never expose myself to the derision of the whole world by following the despised puritans.

What need then have we of Divine teaching to undeceive us, of grace to overcome this desperate tendency to wickedness, of regeneration, of a clean heart and a right spirit! And how necessary that we should pray and watch against ourselves, that we be not finally deceived!

JULY 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—2 Corinthians, v. 1—11.

The Divine Being has established such an invariable order among the works of creation, that one thing naturally and necessarily arises out of another: the effects of the rising of the sun, of the change of the wind, and of the sowing of seed, are invariable. So in the moral world;—"Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap: the wages of sin is death."

The Almighty is said to weigh the actions and the characters of men; hence results the doctrine of a future judgment. Men are to receive the things done in the body; that is, as holy dispositions naturally produce that real happiness which terminates in eternal life, so the results in our characters of the deeds done in the body will constitute that misery which is called "the second death." The commission of sin produces guilt, and guilt produces pain or anguish of mind. One act of sin produces a greater thirst for future gratification; and this thirst, ungratified, will resemble unquenchable fire. The commission of sin produces a tormenting hatred and dread of God; and this will constitute a part of future misery. Acts of sin brutalize the mind: hence cursing, swearing, execrations, and blasphemies. These and other foul deeds of impiety will add to the horrors of infernal society. Further, sin excites among companions in transgression, jealousies, quarrels, dreadful threatenings and imprecations, the desire of destroying each other, and various similar effects: these will be perpetuated in a future state. Sin excites to rivalry, emulation, suspicion, and envy; the same tempers will operate hereafter. Finally, sin naturally produces despair: this effect will constitute the chain of darkness, the ponderous chain that will confine the criminal on the rock of desolation. Thus

will every one receive *according to* the deeds done in the body.

But how will the Christian receive the things done in his body? In exactly the same way. Religion in his mind produced on earth peace, joy, love, benevolence, good-will, and other heavenly fruits: these will all ripen into perfection, and become heaven itself. His work of faith, his patience of hope, and his labours of love, will all end in a large reward.—Thus, as the happiness of God and of all the holy arises out of their natures, so the misery of sinners will have its source in themselves. As the crop of the sower arises out of the seed itself, so whatsoever a man soweth *that that* shall he reap.

Justice and judgment, then, are the establishment or habitation of the Divine throne. Christ will not only be admired, in the day of judgment, in the persons of believers; but the judgment of God, even in the condemnation of the wicked, will then appear to be so full of equity, and to arise so completely out of men's own characters and conduct, that "every mouth will be stopped."

JULY 20.

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

The three epistles of John are full of the subject of Divine love. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" "In this was manifested the love of God." "Herein is love."

The apostle saw something in this love of God, which had no parallel among men.—1. In overtures of friendship or alliance among men, equality of rank is regarded; but here the one party is,—the blessed God, and the other,—fallen creatures, who have lost

their rank and dignity in the intelligent universe.—2. In such alliances, reciprocal affection is insisted upon; but here is God loving those who are at enmity with him by wicked works;—"Herein is love, *not that we loved God*," &c.—3. Suitableness of character and temper is also looked for on these occasions; but here we have a Being of spotless purity placing his affections on creatures notoriously of a backsliding heart and full of perverseness.—4. In alliances among men, an expectation is formed that there shall be an equal participation of benefits; here all the benefits are on one side.—5. If one party be more honourable than the other, it is expected that the inferior will be in a manner dazzled by the exhibition of rank and dignity; but here Christ comes from one world to another, assumes an appearance infinitely beneath his rank, has not a place where to lay his head, and suffers incredibly in his character and in his person, in order to manifest his regard to the objects beloved, and to secure their ltimate union.

It was a combination of such circumstances as these that overwhelmed the mind of John, when he exclaimed,—"Herein is love!" It was not a mother dying for her infant. It was not a person dying for his friend. It was not a son suffering for his father. Nor was it a person's dividing the punishment with another. It was not many a man; but the Son of God for man. It was not a sinner for a sinner; but here he who knew no sin "was made sin for us." It was not a common person for an eminently good man; but the infinitely Holy for the unutterably vile. Well then might the apostle say,—"Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins."—O Lord, draw me by these cords of tender mercy.

JULY 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, ii. 1—16.

Ingratitude towards our fellow-creatures is stigmatized as the basest of vices; and is said to form a proof that the heart impregnated with this vice is too pernicious for any of the virtues to spring up in it. How much more must this be evident in reference to our relation to God! The favours which creatures can bestow upon us are few and limited; but how great must be the favours which are necessarily and incessantly received from the Divine hand, from a Being in whose mind lay the decision whether we should exist or not; but who gave us being; gave us existence among the highest works of his power and wisdom, and added immortality to that existence. He gave some of us a healthful form,—intelligent and pious parents,—and a christian education. He restrained our youthful feet from evil,—gave us all temporal things richly to enjoy,—and added still higher favours, favours lasting as eternity itself. He gave his Son, "spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all." After this, he gave us his word, his ministers, and opportunities of hearing the news of life and salvation,—perhaps produced some impressions on our minds, and offered to us an interest in all the blessings of salvation, that we might become the sons and heirs of God, and possess a crown of righteousness, and a kingdom which cannot be moved.

Such are the favours which the Almighty gives to men; such are the obligations under which we are laid. If these mercies have their own genial influence upon us, we shall be melted down in humble gratitude; and, with the Psalmist, shall call upon our souls and all that is within us, to bless his holy name. We shall say to the young,—"O taste and see that the Lord is good," and to our christian brethren,—

"Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for me." Yea, we shall call all nature to join us;—"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

But, if this goodness has hitherto not melted our hearts, but has been received with a sullen brutal insensibility, God grant that it may, at length, heaped as it has been upon us, lead us to repentance: till each one turn to him, and say,—O Lord, thou hast overcome me with mercy. Base and callous as I have been, I can resist thy "bowels and mercies" no longer. My heart is overwhelmed within me, when I think of my profligate returns, of my abuse of thy mercies, and of their being so awfully turned against thyself, and against the present peace and future happiness of the immortal beings around me. But accept the returning prodigal, who has made thee so long to serve with his sins. Let these cords of love henceforward bind my heart to thee. May I feel that, bought by so many favours, and especially by the blood of Christ, I am no longer my own, but thine.

JULY 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, x. 1—16.

That persons dying unbaptized do not perish on account of the omission of this ordinance, is now generally admitted. But, seeing children partake of the misery brought on mankind by the sin and guilt of our first parents, (and their early death is an awful proof that they do,) it becomes a very serious question, how those who are incapable of the exercise of repentance or faith, which are made absolute conditions of salvation in the gospel, can be saved To this it is answered, that it appears probable, especially from our Lord's words,—"Of such is the kingdom of God," that the benefits of Christ's death

are bestowed on all children who die before the time of accountableness. In favour of this idea, it may be urged ;—

1. There are many passages in the Divine word, in which the Almighty promises to be the God, not only of his people, but of their seed also.—2. Christ is said to be "the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe." The passages which speak of Christ as having died for all, as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and as having tasted death for every man, appear to bear a favourable aspect towards children dying in infancy.—3. Would it not seem to stand against the equity of the Divine proceedings, if persons were to be punished without actual transgression?—4. Is it not probable, that God will punish no man without first placing him in a state of probation?—5. As faith does not merit salvation, and as the merits by which adults are saved are imparted to them in a gratuitous and sovereign manner, children saved, though without believing, are saved exactly in the same way as grown-up persons.—6. As infants, thus saved, are equally indebted to Divine grace for their salvation with adults, they will be equally capable of the exercises of heaven with them; and they will have some causes of joy superior to those of the adult believer: they will have to praise Christ for exemption from all the sufferings they might have endured on earth,—from the shame which would have followed actual guilt,—and from having contributed by their evil conduct and example to the ruin of others.

"Millions of infant souls have join'd the family above."—*Stennett.*

What grounds for joy and thankfulness are here, to parents who have lost their children! Had our children lived to riper years, we should have had no absolute certainty of their final bliss: for God only knoweth the heart. But gone in infancy, we are sure Christ has taken them up in his arms, and blessed them for ever.

JULY 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, lxxiii.

"All's well, that ends well,"—is an old English proverb, at no time more strikingly exemplified than in the last hours of the righteous. The Psalmist describes here feelings not peculiar to himself:—"I was envious, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." These painful feelings he had acquired in his intercourse with men; but they were corrected as soon as he went into the house of God. How often are evil impressions removed from our minds by the salutary influence of Divine exercises; and what a powerful recommendation this is of public worship!

The wicked die in various circumstances, and by many kinds of death; but they all lie down in sorrow. They are "driven away in their wickedness." "Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him." Some die in a state of stupid ignorance; but as this ignorance is wilful, their ignorance will not exempt them from punishment. Others die grossly deceived; but they become sensible of their error, when they hear the voice of the Judge,—"I know thee not, depart." The righteous only hath hope in his death. Some pass out of time into eternity, in great horror: memory supplies only fuel for the inward fire which consumes them. Uninterrupted crimes, or neglect of God,—this is the appalling retrospect which life, now closing, presents. On each side are friends; but their tears, and their terror, remind them that all human help is vain. Looking forward, they perceive that God is angry; Christ hides himself from their view; the Holy Spirit is fled; death is aiming the fatal blow; and hell waits to receive the terrified spirit. At length, it takes the fatal, the irrecoverable plunge into the deeps below.—"How are they brought into

desolation as in a moment!"—I will repine no more at the prosperity of the wicked; but henceforth will call my God my Portion.

But am I not among the wicked? Perhaps I may be mistaken about my state; and, should I remain thus, keeping up a profession, and yet having only a form of godliness, then I may expect, that God, angels, and good men, will soon, very soon leave me for ever: nor shall I ever return to that house of prayer, where I have sat as others, but have gone, and sat, and heard, only to increase my condemnation. O Lord, avert from me the doom of the slothful, unprofitable servant.

JULY 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, xi. 19—36.

A pious man considers God as his All; as the Centre of all his desires, hopes, and pleasures; and as the Source whence he derives all his spiritual enjoyments.

Yet even such persons are in danger of departing from the living God, in heart, in sentiment, or in conduct. Isaiah says,—"As for our transgressions, we know them, in departing away from our God." To prevent this, the Almighty is said to put his fear into their hearts; and, to strengthen this fear, the apostle gives the exhortation, — "Beware, brethren."

When the heart becomes cold towards the Redeemer, towards devotional exercises, and towards the people of God, we may be sure the warning of the apostle is necessary. When the truths of the gospel, and especially those truths which comprise the essence of the gospel, are held loosely, and we

feel not that warm interest in them which we once did,—when it appears less a matter of consequence to our safety, whether we be warmly attached to Christ or not,—when by our conduct we evidently prefer the world to our brethren, our worldly interests to those of Christ and our salvation, when we have little regard for the Divine honour, in maintaining a holy conversation, we cannot doubt but that we have awfully departed from God.

Unbelief, applied to the blessed God as the Christian's Portion, to the Sacred Scriptures, especially the promises and threatenings, and to all invisible realities, is the grand instrument of our defection. It strips all these things of that sacred force which they once had upon us, paralyzes our exertions, gives our enemies double power over us, and robs us of our christian armour. We give up much of our hope in God, and then depart from him to broken cisterns; and, if the Good Shepherd do not bring us back, we shall depart, to return no more. It was this sin which kept so many of the Israelites out of Canaan; they could not enter in because of unbelief; and it is the same sin which will keep us out of heaven, if we are not saved from its power.

JULY 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Exodus, xx.

It is important that we should know how far the coming of Christ affected the dispensation of Moses. He abolished all religious services purely ceremonial and typical, and most of the positive rites; but he came to abolish nothing moral: in this respect, though heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle of the law shall not pass away.

Among positive institutions he did not set aside the Sabbath, though he corrected the notions of the Jews

respecting the observance of it, allowing works of mercy and necessity to be performed in it; and it is supposed that from the example of the first christians, the first day of the week was adopted as the day of rest instead of the seventh, and called "the Lord's day." The spirit of the command appears to be in men's devoting one seventh portion of their time to religious purposes.

We are commanded,—1. To remember it: to separate it from the rest of our time, and to remember the occasion of its institution,—the creation, or the resurrection of Christ.—2. To keep it holy; all our worldly concerns are to be suspended; and our thoughts, words, and actions, are to be sanctified, Isaiah, lviii. 13.—3. Children and servants are to be freed, as much as possible, from labour, yea, our very cattle, and the stranger that is within our gates.

There appears to be the highest wisdom in thus separating a seventh portion of our time to the Almighty and our eternal interests. Man was made for God and eternity. It is a part of the curse, that we are compelled to labour six parts out of seven of our time; and awful experience proves, that one day in seven is little enough to keep our minds from being absorbed in present things. The Sabbath has tended greatly to keep good men together, and to preserve the public ordinances of religion from being lost; it has, also, proved a great blessing to all the nations who have observed it.

To violate the Sabbath, is to trample on an institution which the Almighty himself honoured, by ceasing on the first seventh day even from the work of creation. This profanation also denies to our own souls the benefits of public worship, the reading of the word, the instruction of our families, and meditation on our spiritual concerns. It shuts the door of salvation against servants and others; and in heathen countries, it hardens idolaters in their rejection of the gospel. Lastly, it secularizes the mind, and

effectually cuts off from that mercy which thousands have found in the sabbath.

Blessed be God, there is a sabbath in reserve, a rest remaining for the people of God. How near then the Object of worship!—How highly prepared the mind will then be for praise and worship! What a blessed congregation!

JULY 26.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelations, v.

It is probable that the chief events which take place on earth, are known to our friends in heaven. We are sure they are known to Christ: and from two facts mentioned in the New Testament, it would seem that they are also known to the angels:—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" and we read of the joy of the inhabitants of heaven at the punishment of antichrist, Revelations, xix.—Supposing our friends above to know all our concerns, what a new interest it gives to our mean affairs! For, though a Christian knows that the Almighty numbers all the hairs of his head; yet the Divine Majesty is so far above him, that he would still have an addition to his joy, if he were sure that the things, which form the ground of his joys and sorrows, are known to his friends in heaven.

The redeemed in heaven appear to be deeply affected,—1. At the remembrance of the state in which they once were on earth;—"To him that washed us from our sins:"—2. With a recollection of the means of their deliverance,—the blood-shedding of Christ:—3. With a view of the love of Christ their Deliverer: and,—4. With a sight of the dignities to which they are raised,—"he hath made us kings and priests unto God."

We may suppose that to a spirit made perfect, sin must appear far more exceedingly sinful than it could do while the saint remained in some degree allied to it, and his perception was obscured by it. It is now also seen in all its tendencies, both towards the Governor of the universe, and towards our fellow-creatures. If on earth a view of their pollated state produced in Christians humility and self-abhorrence, how much more will this be the case in heaven, in the presence of the Lamb whose blood was shed to atone for it! The feelings of glorified saints, respecting the mode of their deliverance, must also be very acute. That the glorious Person whom they now see as he is, should have loved such unworthy creatures, should have washed them in his blood, should have endured such incredible sufferings, that they might escape; how wonderful will all this appear, and what astonishment inconceivable and unabating will it excite! These views will fill them with unutterable gratitude to such a Benefactor; especially when they consider how low they were sunk, and how low the Lord Jesus Christ went, to bring them up from the horrible pit. Every reference to their former state, and every recollection of what he must have endured, and what he did in their conversion and preservation, rouse all their devout feelings; and they fill heaven with the sounds,—"Unto Him,—unto Him,—unto Him, be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." What a scene is here! Infinite benevolence rejoicing over immortal beings delivered by a stupendous Divine interposition from so great a death; and all these myriads of recovered beings admiring the infinite excellence and the matchless mercy of their Deliverer! But these feelings possessed by glorified men in heaven must be in their degree formed in the mind on earth; otherwise we shall not be qualified to share in their enjoyments.

JULY 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xi. 1—16.

The state of security in which the greater part of mankind remain, appears most awful to an awakened sinner; and this is more sensibly felt when this false security is seen in intimate friends and affectionate relations. What would a sincere Christian give, if he could awaken them to a sense of their danger! Many things tend to promote this thoughtless state of mind; among others, false notions relative to the way of acceptance with God, heavy cares, and excessive indulgence in earthly pleasures. If, however, the word of God be true, the state of all men by sin is most alarming:—"The soul that sinneth shall die." "All have sinned." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law." Thus the law and justice of God denounce vengeance against the sinner.—The word of condemnation is gone forth out of the mouth of God; the very interposition of Christ supposes the case to be most alarming; and the forebodings of judgment and punishment are to be traced in the fears of all when their lives are in jeopardy. Thus God warns men that the storm of his wrath is gathering: he who believes the threatening, becomes moved with fear; he imitates Noah, and provides for his security; while the person who does not believe the warning, acts like the generation by which Noah was surrounded.

The awakened sinner is moved as Noah was,—by fleeing for refuge to that means of preservation which the Divine mercy has provided: the whole safety of a Christian lies in his being found in Christ. Romans, viii. 1, and Philippians, iii. 9. Noah had been preaching all the while the ark was preparing, which occupied a very long time; and the ark itself, and the conduct of Noah in building it, preached to the world a silent and a solemn lecture. But they

believed not till the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came, and took them all away. What must have been their sensations, when the door closed upon Noah, and when from the fountains of the great deep the streams issued, and the flood-gates of heaven were opened! Then we might have seen them ascending the highest eminences, but in vain. Nor did their cries avail: the heavens were as brass to their prayers. But Noah rode safely through the abyss, saved by grace through faith. What feelings of amazement at the stupidity of the wicked! What awful ideas of Divine Justice, while the terrified and distracted world were expiring around him! What gratitude for the goodness which saved him amidst the general wreck!

The righteous and the wicked are engaged in two opposite experiments, connected with eternal consequences. The righteous believe God in his threatenings, and secure themselves against the wrath revealed by a proper attention to their salvation. The wicked, not believing the threatenings, resolve to run the risk, and to dare the consequences. Noah, by his faith, condemned the world. So every one who believes the Divine threatenings, and flees for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him, condemns all those who live without a due concern about their salvation.

JULY 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, viii. 1.—28.

We never give a man credit for wisdom, who enters on an undertaking, without having his plan before him, and without the capacity of overcoming the difficulties which may lay in the way of its accomplishment.

Should there be any thing in the scriptures, which seems to imply a reflection on the benevolence of

the Deity, let us be assured of this, that there can be nothing in the sacred economy but what is perfectly consistent with the most enlarged descriptions of this attribute. At the same time, let us remember, that our views of Divine justice and of human offence must be very imperfect, and that in deciding between the government of Jehovah, and ourselves, we are very partial and incompetent judges. There are in the world a people mixed with their fellow-creatures, and known to be different from others only by certain dispositions of mind, and a certain series of actions, who are called, in scripture, "Christians," "the people of God," and are distinguished by other names, which show purposes of grace in the Divine mind respecting them. To the good of this people the infinite wisdom of God makes all events subservient, either as medicine or food, either to instruct or to correct, to restrain or to urge forward; so that there is no affliction, however grievous, no disaster, however painful, but what has a blessing in it; even death itself is mentioned as part of the patrimony of Christians. This might have been expected from the infinite wisdom of God, that he would not only give his people grace to meet and overcome all natural and spiritual evils, but that he would convert poison itself into a most efficacious remedy against disease; and make all the vicissitudes of life work together for good. —This is strikingly illustrated in the history of Joseph, in which we behold a series of events (which produced on the mind of Jacob this impression, — "All these things are against me") so wrought up together as to force from the same mind this acknowledgment, —"It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." But the whole combined operation of all the circumstances in the life of each believer not only produces a passing good, but contributes to the perfection of the mind; till the person thus afflicted and comforted, thus raised and depressed, thus led or driven, become a perfect man, and attain unto the measure of the stature of the

fulness of Christ. Where the events of life are not thus regulated, and directed, and applied in measure by the Divine hand, they produce, through the evil dispositions of the parties, every baneful present effect, and final ruin.

JULY 29.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, vii.

Though the heart is so full of evil, that the best men would be ashamed of exposing to view the thoughts and feelings which sometimes rise in the mind during a single hour; yet most unconverted persons persist in maintaining that the heart is naturally good. This delusion is kept up by sermons, and books found in almost every library, containing encomiums on fallen man, and direct attacks on the scripture doctrine of innate depravity; and by inscriptions, such as the following, found in our churchyards,—

> "Sleep soft in dust, wait the Almighty's will,
> Then rise unchang'd, and be an angel still."

The baneful effects of preaching and propagating this doctrine are seen in the condition of those who believe it: they are highly offended if their state towards God be questioned; they see merit in duties performed without the least attachment to God; and by confidence in these duties, the conscience becomes deceived, the person's real state is undiscerned, and he is prevented from applying that remedy which is the only thing that stands between him and ruin. David, and all whose views and feelings were right, were so far from avoiding examination, that they solicited the Almighty himself to try them. Knowing the infinite value of the soul, and the deceitfulness

of sin, they feared deception; hence they cried,—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

Whether we are willing to undergo the Divine scrutiny or not, God will try the heart. But what an awful thought! Who shall stand when he appeareth? Who can bear those eyes to search him, which are too pure to bear the sight of iniquity, and in penetration are as a flame of fire? How should we fear, if the holiest man on earth were to know all our thoughts and desires! But who among the sinful race of Adam can bear the inspection and surrounding presence of God; an inspection piercing, not superficial; constant, not transient; and so pure, that the slightest taint of evil is intolerably offensive, and rouses the indignation of an Almighty Power as just as he is merciful? To a person ignorant of his character, this inspection may not appear alarming; but in him who knows that his heart is desperately wicked; that out of it proceed all manner of evil thoughts, and even murders and adulteries; that it is "a cage of unclean birds;" this constant inspection of his heart and his life excites the most awakening apprehensions. And yet to know that God thus searches the heart, is very profitable, as it tends to keep the mind habitually humble. We may be proud in the presence of dust and ashes like ourselves; but who can be proud, who is conscious that his most secret thoughts and imaginations are distinctly known to God? This inspection of the heart by the Almighty is an awful thought to the hypocrite! That profession which is not sincere, as it cannot deceive God, is one of the most consummate marks of folly to be found among mankind.

JULY 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Corinthians, xv. 35—58.

No wise man treats the subject of death with levity. If death were merely the destruction of animal life, all might be heroes: but even in reference to the present state, death is a most serious thing, since it breaks up all our connexions; takes us away from the desire of our eyes; puts an end to all our unfinished plans and engagements, however important; forces us to leave some behind whose comfort appeared to depend upon our life; separates soul and body; and closes our day of probation for ever. But, as connected with eternity, there is an inconceivable bitterness in death: to many it resembles an awful plunge into some unfathomable ocean of new existence. To a person dying without hope in Christ, the remembrance of the sins of his youth, and of riper years, stings like an adder, and bites like a serpent. Some particular sins perhaps press heavily upon the conscience; or the person's transgressions may appear innumerable; and now are realized the words of Solomon;—"A wounded spirit, who can bear?" It is, however, the law which empowers sin thus to fill the soul with guilt and terror. The offender knows that the actions which now break his peace, are contrary to the Divine law; and that this law pronounces a dreadful curse against the offender. God will not let me go unpunished, is the language of the sinner feeling the venom of the sting of death. Such is the certain termination of a life of sin, provided the dying man have the possession of his reason, and his conscience be in any measure enlightened to know his condition.

To the Christian a song of victory over death is given; and this victory is obtained through our Lord Jesus Christ. What would a man's own works do

here? To the demands of justice, that the law should be fulfilled and its curse borne, the dying believer can only reply, that Christ has become his Substitute. If it be urged, that the person's sins are numerous and very heavily aggravated; he still pleads the death of the Son of God, and the promises given to all coming sinners, upon which he has rested his hopes. God himself, the Legislator and the offended Sovereign, he adds, is the Justifier. Such are the pleas of a dying Christian, and these pleas have always been found fully sufficient to take away the sting of death, and the strength of the law. In this way Simeon died;—"I have seen thy salvation." Resting on this hope, the Apostle Paul could look steadfastly at the last enemy, and challenge him to show his sting. It is the Judge of all, then, which giveth this victory:—"It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"

What a blessing is victory over such an enemy! Death does not seize Christians as the prisoners of Divine justice; but he comes to set the spirit free, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them who are bound.—"Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

JULY 31.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, xlv.

Our Lord once asked the Jews this question,—"What think ye of Christ?" A most important question! For, our salvation depends upon our knowledge of Christ, and on right feelings towards him. We look to forms, to baptism, to the Lord's supper, to a decent behaviour, to honesty in our dealings, to vows of amendment, and to promises of obedience; when the great act which is to save us, is,—"Looking unto Jesus."

In various passages of scripture, our attention is drawn by the sacred writers to the perfection of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and to his ability to meet the whole case of the sinner, and to save him to the uttermost. The all-sufficiency of Christ to save, in the first place, has reference to the work he has already accomplished, the satisfaction he has given to Divine Justice, the fulfilment of the law, and the work of intercession upon which he has entered in heaven. But let us now look at Christ as saving the sinner from his sinful nature. In order to his salvation, skill and power are required, to counteract all the evil propensities of his nature, and the power and craft of the enemies out of whose hands he is to be rescued. The cases of sinners are extremely various; one person depends upon the merit of his own actions for acceptance with his Judge; another is openly profane and licentious; his whole thoughts and affections appear to have been immersed in sin; another has his education in fatal errors, or has imbibed them in later years; errors defended by the learned, and which to him appear most consistent with the dictates of reason, the dignity of man, and the goodness of God; another case is that of the backslider, the difficulties of whose case lie in the nature of the temptations by which he has fallen, and the length of time during which he has been wandering from God. Yet, how well the Lord Jesus executes the office of a Saviour! Let the case of self-righteous Paul, of the licentious Colonel Gardiner, of John Bunyan, Pascal and others brought up in dangerous errors, of Peter and other backsliders, be considered; and then we shall be convinced that "he can save to the uttermost." But, lastly, in bringing every Christian to the saving knowledge of Christ, and saving him from ten thousand dangers, we have still further proof how well qualified Christ must be to bring so many sons unto glory. How easily is the cure performed;—Look, and be saved! All the ends of the earth are invited: therefore all are welcome.