

"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."

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 MARCH 1.

*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."

Let us carefully weigh the following passages, and see whether they do not contain the doctrine of fore-appointment:—"Thine they were, and thou gavest them me. Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them. And I give unto them eternal life. My Father which gave them me is greater than all. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We are further taught, that this predestination extends to the meanest circumstances of life:—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered. All things are delivered unto me of my Father."

Art thou willing, O my soul, that God should thus arrange all things after the counsel of his own will? If he punish, remember, thou hast deserved his wrath. If he save, thou wilt be eternally indebted to his unmerited favour. If there be any thing in these awful truths too profound, still rest in this, that God cannot err; and that soon every cloud which hangs over these mysteries will be for ever dispersed.

"All things in earth, and all in heaven,  
On thy eternal will depend;  
And all for greater good were given,  
And all shall in thy glory end."

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## MARCH 2.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Matthew, xv. 19.

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness: these are the things which defile a man. A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Thus our Lord taught that human nature was so totally depraved and corrupted by sin, that nothing short of a new birth could qualify a person for the kingdom of heaven, or capacitate him to see it.

The essence of human depravity lies in two things:—an inveterate proneness to evil, and an unconquerable aversion to good. Hence arises a spiritual incapacity which amounts to an entire prostration of spiritual strength, and the absence of every principle of goodness or energy by which the culprit might rise from his ruin. If there be not merely an unvarying tendency sin-wards, but also an utter aversion to that which is holy, in such sad circumstances whence shall we look for relief? We pronounce his case to be hopeless, whose disorder has converted all the juices of the body into the means of its own increase, and whose stomach at the same time loathes and rejects the remedy.—Such is the state of man:—“the whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint.” “But is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?” Blessed, blessed be the Lord,

“His hands infected nature cure.”

He opens the eyes of the understanding, and shines into the heart, and conveys the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He subdues the stubborn will, and makes the obstinate sinner willing in the day of his power. He purifies the affections, and sheds abroad in the heart a Saviour's love, taking away the idols, and restoring to the blessed God his sovereignty in the soul. Finally, the conscience is purged from its subjection to error, and restored to its sensibility, so that it now becomes the friend of God, and asserts his claim to reign over the whole man. And thus the glorious Redeemer creates all things new, and begins that good work which he will never abandon till he has restored the soul to its original perfection, and given it back to God to be his eternal abode through the Spirit.

O Lord, let my depraved heart feel thy renewing influences. I would bless thee for the incarnation and blood-shedding of the Redeemer, by which sins the most numerous and aggravated are forgiven; but may I never be satisfied without being wholly and eternally thine, in body, soul, and spirit.

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MARCH 3.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, vi. 44.

“Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”—Having fore-appointed to a happy destiny those called the flock of Christ, he adds,—“My sheep hear my voice. No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.”

Here then, in the fullest manner, our Lord teaches us that Christians are called by the grace of God, and that this calling is effectual in their conversion. This calling implies, that, before it took place, the man was at a distance, and that this call brought him near; that he was in darkness, and that this was a call into marvellous light; and that he was in a state of spiritual death, when he thus heard the voice of the Son of God, and came forth. Hence we see, that religion is something more than the existence of christian notions in the mind; a light shines into the heart, which is never put out; an anxiety is imparted to the conscience, which nothing but hope in Christ can pacify; an impulse is given to the will, which nothing can successfully resist; and desires are imparted to the mind, which nothing but the living water which Christ has promised can quench.

In this call various means are employed,—as

friends, books, providential events, but specially the influences of the Holy Spirit, by which, according to our Lord's words, the mind is drawn to Christ; and by which influences alone the outward means are made effectual.

Am I then thus called; or am I without God and without hope in the world, seeking rest, and finding none? Calls I have surely had; but many are thus called, while few are chosen. O Lord, let me not be deceived in this point. As a convinced sinner, may I really and heartily come to Christ, and be enabled by faith to trust my salvation in his hands. Lord, I would believe,—Oh, help that faith in me which may, strictly speaking, be called unbelief!

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MARCH 4.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, v. 24.

“How should man be just with God? What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water.”—There is no truth more plain, than, that all human righteousness must come far short of the demands of a law requiring absolute perfection. Still, the question is, How may man be delivered from condemnation, and placed in a state of acceptance or justification? The offence must be removed, and the guilt taken away; or how, in a court where crime was never overlooked, shall man be acquitted and cleared, and a holy God, yea, an infinitely holy Lawgiver, accept him?

There is a difference between pardon and justification; and yet in scripture we read,—“We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness

of sins;" and again, "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Hence we may conclude, that in procuring pardon and justification, both the active obedience, and the sufferings of Christ, were necessary: for without pardon a sinner could never be justified, and yet justification must be a distinct act from pardon in the application of salvation. Repentance and confession are the capacitating conditions of pardon, while faith seems to be immediately connected with justification.

With this explanation of scripture-terms, let us see how far the doctrine of justification by faith was taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. We may, however, still further premise, that if our future happiness had depended on obedience to the precepts of Christ as a Divine Teacher, and not on faith in him as our Redeemer, such expressions as the following, would not have been so frequent in his discourses:— "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be condemned." "God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Now if we are to esteem the apostle Paul a fair expositor of our Lord's words in thus uniting faith with salvation, the matter will be decided, that our Lord Jesus plainly taught the doctrine of justification by faith; this apostle saith, (Romans, iv.) "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And in Philip-pians, iii. "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." Hence we see, that believing in Christ is connected with justification, and consequently with salvation: and therefore our Lord says,— "He that believeth shall be saved."

## MARCH 5.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xi. 1—13.

The term sanctification means nothing more than the perfecting of our spiritual nature; and, as there is in us, on account of our innate depravity, a constant disposition to degeneracy, this sanctification is accomplished in us by the Holy Spirit, through the means found in the church, assisted by the discipline administered by Divine Providence.—According to this system, Christians are not merely holy, so far as certain acts of morality and benevolence extend, but they derive a holy nature and immortal principles from the Holy Spirit, so that as men can never act oppositely to their nature, a new nature is given them, and with this new nature, they serve God with a full consecration of the heart. Did not our Lord teach this doctrine? It was he that said,—“Ye must be born again: that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” “Sanctify them by thy truth.”

This doctrine, thus taught by our adorable Redeemer, is not only confirmed by the whole body of Divine revelation, but is most consolatory to the Christian. Is sight desirable to the blind? Not more so than Divine light to those who sit in the region and under the shadow of death. Do the weary long for rest,—the hungry for food,—the sorrowful for joy,—the oppressed for deliverance,—the prisoner for liberty? Not more than a real Christian seeks for the renovating influences of the Spirit, by which he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. And never was rest more pleasant to the sinking traveller, never was liberty more welcome to the captive, nor water to the thirsty and fainting pilgrim, than are the thoughts of absolute and eternal freedom from sin, and heavenly perfection, to the sincere Christian.—

“Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.”

Hast thou not promised, O gracious Saviour, that the Holy Spirit shall be given to those who ask? Lord, give me his purifying, elevating, and preserving influences. What is dark in me, illumine. What is obdurate, melt. What is crooked, make straight. What is grovelling, elevate. What is impure, cleanse. What is rash and presumptuous, restrain. And by the indwelling of thy Holy Spirit may I be a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory. Help me to seek my sanctification in all means, through all persons, in all trials, and through every stage of my present mortal pilgrimage; till, at length, shaking off a body of death and all its tempting powers at once, I spring into life and everlasting liberty.

### MARCH 6.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xx. 27—28.

The lengths to which the blessed God condescends to go, in the expressions of his love to man, are beyond measure astonishing: we are assured that he takes them into the relation of children; gives them the spirit of adoption; permits and enables them with filial confidence to call him Father; and makes them “heirs of God.” As though this were not going far enough, he makes them “joint heirs with Christ.” This last privilege relates to that in the union between Christ and his members, which the apostle himself calls, “a great mystery.” There is such a union between Christ’s human nature and believers, that they are said to make but one body: so that believers will share in the honours and privileges allotted to Christ as man. These honours are alluded to in that passage in the Revelation,—“That ye may

sit with me on my throne, as I overcame, and am sat down with my Father on his throne."

This doctrine is expressly inculcated by our Lord in the prayer which he taught his disciples:—"When ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven." Also in the first chapter of the gospel by the apostle John, and in other places, as,—“To as many as received him, to them gave he power, or privilege, to become the sons of God.” “That ye may be the children of your Father in heaven.” “Blessed are the peace-makers: they shall be called the children of God.”

This adoption into the Divine family takes place as soon as a person believes in Christ: from that hour, he is no more a stranger, a foreigner, and an alien, but a child of God. All God's dealings towards him are those of a Father; and to enable him to enter into the blessedness of this state, the spirit of adoption is given him. Till men receive this filial disposition, they may approach God, officially, formally, abjectly, or arrogantly, as all unconverted men and hypocrites do; but they know not the pleasures of approaching him with reverence mixed with child-like confidence and freedom, which is called “the spirit of adoption.” In this spirit true Christians hold communion with him; express towards him the warmest feelings of attachment, confidence, joy, and peace; and use a holy importunity in seeking at the throne of grace the blessings he has promised.

O that I may be enabled to receive the Saviour, and through faith in him be admitted into the family of God; that the spirit of bondage may be removed, and that I may receive the spirit of adoption, and cry, Abba, Father.

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### MARCH 7.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, x. 22—29.

All real Christians are kept by the power of God from falling into such sin and unbelief as to involve

them in misery after death. They are "kept through faith unto salvation." This doctrine was fully taught by our Lord, of whom it is also graciously said,— "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

But may I then give up all christian watchfulness, and live indifferent to the correctness of my conduct? If the believer cannot perish, may not I venture on paths full of danger? No: let me remember, that I am no longer entitled to the character of one of Christ's flock but while I follow the good Shepherd, and hear his voice; that the means by which I am to be kept are inseparably connected with the security of my person, and my final happiness. And therefore we read,— "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Hold fast, that no man take thy crown." He who does not as heartily love these exhortations, as the absolute assurances of safety and perseverance, may be very certain, that he does not maintain this blessed truth in righteousness.

What consolation arises to the tempted, persecuted, and heavy-laden Christian, from the assurance that Christ will not let his enemies prevail against him; that he shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. In proportion to the greatness of a blessing, and our anxiety to obtain it, must be the joy that the possession of that blessing is made sure

to us. And caust thou, Lord, thus set thy heart on the worm man, so as to love him from everlasting, to persevere in thy love to him, not only through an incarnation full of overwhelming sorrow, but through all his perverseness and backslidings, never leaving him till thou hast landed him safe beyond the reach of sin, death, and hell? Wonderful condescension!

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MARCH 8.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Matthew, xxviii.

“I know that the Messiah cometh, who is called Christ. When he is come, he will tell us all things.”  
 “We have the mind of Christ.” “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

If we were to seek a summary of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as taught by himself, we should find it to include accounts of,—the unity of God; the trinity in unity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the elect and fallen angels; the creation of the world; the government of the world by the Son of God; the sinfulness of men, and their exposure to ruin; the incarnation of the Son; the fore-appointment of believers to eternal life; the necessity of repentance, faith, and holiness, to our being in a state of salvation; the institution of baptism and the Lord's supper; the state of probation terminating at death; the immateriality of the soul; the immediate entrance of the soul after death on a state of happiness or misery; the resurrection of the righteous and of the wicked; the day of judgment both for men and fallen angels; the banishment of the wicked into a state of endless misery with fallen angels, and the invitation of the righteous into a

kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

Every part of this system will be found in the life of Christ ; so that Christ himself, even before the work of redemption was finished, revealed the whole of those doctrines upon which the whole church is built ; so far from truth is it, that in the discourses of Christ is found only a system of sublime morality.

What discoveries are here ! What sublime, what cheering, what awful truths ! O that I may be deeply and constantly affected by these truths according to the deep stake I have in them, and the high authority from which they descend ! Living, may I adorn this gospel : and dying, receive it into my heart, the antidote of death !

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MARCH 9.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, xiii. 1—15.

It is an apostolic injunction ;—“ Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.” That we are to be imitators of the Lord Jesus, and set his example constantly before us, none can doubt. Nor should the perfection of his character deter us : we are destined to be wholly like him when we shall see him as he is, and therefore it must be a duty to be aiming at this mark of our high calling even in the present state.

Let us then imitate Christ, in his *contempt* of worldly *grandeur* and *applause*. When offered all the kingdoms of the world, his answer was, “ Get thee hence, Satan.” When they would take him by force, and make him a king,—“ He departed again into a mountain himself alone.” When he had performed the most wonderful miracles, he commanded the recipients of his mercy not to publish them, or he withdrew from the applauses of the multitude. Such

were his *spirituality* and *devotion*, that we find him seeking retirement on mountains, and continuing all night in prayer to God. Such his *zeal*, that, to do the will of his Father, was his meat and drink. Such his *fortitude* and *holy courage*, that respecting his bitter sufferings, he says, I have a baptism to be baptized with, or an immersion in sufferings to undergo; \* and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Such his *benevolence*, that, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Such his *forbearance*, that, when the inhabitants of a certain village would not entertain him, and his disciples would have called for fire from heaven to consume them, he said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives: but to save them." Such was his *clemency*, that he prayed for his murderers;—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what to do." Such was his *pity*, that rather than the multitude should faint by the way, he fed them by miracle. Such was his *submission*, that in the greatest possible extremity, when the cup of Divine indignation was put into his hand, though his human nature shrunk at first, he added,—“Not my will, but thine be done.” Such was his *condescension*, that he took up children into his arms, and blessed them, conversed with the woman of Samaria, and permitted the Apostle John to repose on his bosom. May we put on the Lord Jesus.—“If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

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MARCH 10.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, iv. 14—30.

This sermon was preached in the place of worship which Christ had attended during his childhood. It

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\* Doddridge.

seems also that latterly he had been used to read from the sacred books to the congregation. On this day he stood up to read, as his custom was, and the Book of Isaiah was put into his hand. His text was taken from Isaiah, lxi. 1. After reading the first verse, and the first clause of the second, he gave the book to the minister or servant of the synagogue, and sat down, and then began to explain and apply the subject. We may suppose that Christ made known who were the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised, and the nature of the jubilee which he was appointed to proclaim,—even freedom from the power of Satan, and from the thralldom of sin. He had a most attentive congregation, for the eyes of all were fixed upon him, and they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth: thus was “grace poured into his lips.” From such a discourse it might have been supposed that multitudes would have been persuaded to embrace him as the Messiah, but the good seed was sown on stony ground; they heard the word with joy, but they soon became offended at the obscurity of his birth, and instead of heartily owning him, and becoming his disciples,—“they led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.” So ended this wonderful discourse; and thus may it still be with hearers who have been quite captivated with some living preacher. Such is popular applause. The doctrine which had thus enraged them was that of the Divine sovereignty, as manifested in two memorable events in their history. One occurred when the Prophet Elijah was sent to live with a Canaanitish widow, at Sarepta, during a famine which lasted more than three years, rather than to any widow in Israel. The other case occurred in the days of Elisha, who, though there were many lepers in Israel, was sent to none of them, but was sent to Naaman, the Syrian. This doctrine, that God has a right to dispense

his favours as he will, is very galling to human pride, and stung to madness this people, for they valued themselves on this very circumstance, that they were the favourites of Heaven.

O Lord, may I be delivered from the pride and stubbornness which would prevent me from seeing and acknowledging my deserts as a sinner. May I humbly own, that I deserve not the least of thy mercies, and that, if thou dealest with me according to my deeds, I must perish. May I thankfully acknowledge every respite from destruction, as more than I deserve, and every glimmering hope of obtaining thy final favour, as the manifestation of infinite goodness.

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MARCH 11.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Matthew, v. 1—12.

Our Lord begins his ministry by pronouncing blessings on all capable of enjoying them. But how different are those whom he pronounces blessed from those to whom in all ages the meed of human praise has been offered! Among all who in every age have been elevated by the poet, the orator, the sculptor, scarcely an individual will be found, who, if he had been presented to Christ, would have met with such a reception as that given to the person mentioned in Mark, i. 40. The persons whom Christ first blesses are the humble, that is, "the poor in spirit." In this expression is implied, a proper sense of spiritual deficiencies, and of evil desert, causing a man to tremble at the Divine threatenings: this spirit is commended by David, when he places a broken heart above all sacrifices; and by Isaiah, who represents God, the High and Lofty One, inhabiting eternity, as saying,—“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” He next pronounces a blessing

on "the mourners," by whom, no doubt, he means those who mourn for sin; for,—“the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Then on “the meek,” who are promised the inheritance of the earth. By the meek here, we are to understand those who are free from avarice, rage, and passion, and are content and happy in their lot. These are indeed the persons who alone enjoy the blessings of the earth. Christ next blesses those who are not content in a state of spiritual destitution, but “who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” He then blesses “the merciful,” promising that they shall obtain mercy; that is, the dispensations of the Almighty in this world shall be conducted so as to favour the merciful in the eyes of those who might oppress them. If the words are to be understood of future mercy, in the day of judgment, then other qualifications are necessary as well as a merciful disposition; for, no man is saved by works, no, nor by holy dispositions, which are the fruits of faith in Christ, through which faith alone we are said to be saved. The next who are blessed, are “the pure in heart;” to them it is promised that they shall see God. From this and other passages, (John, iii. 3, and 1 John, iii. 2.) we are to understand, that not only is a change necessary before we can see God, but a transformation of soul, which shall capacitate us to see God, who is for ever veiled, except to faculties purified from sin. “The peace-makers” are also placed among the blessed, as well as the persecuted and reviled. O may I be found possessing the temper which Christ approves, and be found among those whom he will bless before men and angels.

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 MARCH 12.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Mark, x. 13—16.

While in some countries we see the practice of infanticide, and in all, where persons are not serious

Christians, the spiritual interests of the young sinfully neglected, we find the sacred scriptures manifesting the utmost care relative to the best good of the rising generation; and, as might be expected, our gracious Redeemer leading the way, taking up infants in his arms, blessing them, and directing them to be brought to him to receive the benefits he imparts. Parents and guardians are hereby instructed to bring children in the arms of prayer, and present them to Christ, and second this act of piety by bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, dealing with them as God with his children, uniting tenderness, instruction, and correction, in their education.

The great work that a parent then has to do, is, to bring his children to the knowledge of Christ, to a trust in him and an imitation of him; and as this cannot be accomplished without the Saviour's blessing, so it becomes a paramount duty to pray for children, to pray with them, and to teach them early to come to the Saviour for themselves. It is his blessing which can alone enrich them: and, though the enlargement of their minds on every subject not immediately religious, is of great importance, yet it is the knowledge of Christ which can alone elevate the mind to its true dignity.

It is very probable, that these parents brought their children to Christ, expecting that there was some charm in his touch to keep off diseases, or they might do it under the idea, that the blessing of such a prophet would avail to some good purpose in the future lives of these infants. Whatever was their motive, it was very unbecoming in the disciples to forbid them; and the guilt of those who neglect to bring their children to Christ, that he may bestow upon them early grace, is very great; although theirs is far far greater, who endeavour to hinder their children from seeking and following Christ.

The duties of parents are very important indeed, and the responsibility under which they lie is a very heavy one. Respecting many a child lost by the

sinful example and the neglect of parents, we may suppose the Almighty to have said,—“He shall die in his sins, but his blood will I require at thy hand.” The idea is a most painful one, that even christian parents have so little truly serious intercourse with their children. They can converse with them on all other subjects except that which should swallow up all others. Hence so few children have to ascribe their conversion to the prayers or the spiritual efforts of their parents.

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MARCH 13.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Mark, x. 17—27.

Most persons, especially the rich, are indifferent to another life: but here is a person, a young man too, and one, though rich, who appears to be concerned about a future state:—“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” Further, he was, from his youth up, highly regular and amiable, so that it is said, our Lord loved him. Where then did he come short? In his love of riches: these he could not part with, even to purchase eternal life. Such is the fascination of wealth, that where the grace of God is not given, it is sure to be preferred to the highest blessings of religion. Hence our Lord improves this occurrence, after the young man had retired, in order to impress on the minds of his disciples the certain fatality of riches, where the principle of grace does not counteract their bewitching effects on the mind; so that, except, as all things are possible with God, it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven: this sentence is, however, qualified by our Lord afterwards, who confines it to such as trust in riches. This decision respecting the danger of riches, shows the mistake of

those who think the high road to heaven is by deeds of charity, rather than by faith; for, were alms the way to heaven, the rich would have one signal advantage above all the rest of the community.

Others have objected, that it is very plain from this history, that the way to obtain eternal life is by keeping the law, rather than by faith; for, Christ himself, in answer to the very question, Which is the way to heaven? says, Keep the law. A little consideration will correct this error. Our Lord is here, no doubt, employing the law as a school-master to bring this young man to himself. He was evidently elated with the merit of his works:—"What lack I yet?" And to show him, that no flesh living could be justified by the law in the sight of God, Christ asks him,—“Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God.”

Six of the commandments are mentioned. The young man declares, that in all these duties he is perfect. Without disputing the truth of this boast, though it would have been easy to have proved that in each of these commands he had failed, our Lord merely mentions, in another form, the last command;—"Thou shalt not covet." "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow me." This brought to light the state of his heart, and showed him that he was a sinner. Paul, though, like this young man, he once thought himself blameless, was convinced of sin by the application of the same commandment;—"I had not known sin, if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet."

How utterly unaccountable, even on the principles of reason, is the conduct of those who neglect the concerns of a future state, and the salvation revealed in the gospel! How contrary to every maxim of worldly prudence is this total abandonment of all concern for the soul! What a wretched choice was this of the young man! Yet it is the choice of thousands: Christ for thirty pieces of silver.—

“Not this man, but Barabbas: now Barabbas was a robber.”

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MARCH 14.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, vii. 36—48.

As our Lord came to seek sinners as well as to save them, so he refused no invitation of a social nature, though among persons of feelings very different from his own; intending to inculcate some lesson which, as the good seed, might bear fruit to eternal life. The manners of the Jews, also, no doubt, admitted of the introduction of religious topics into conversation, much more than would now be tolerated in European society; so that there was a much better prospect of doing good there than in a state of society where the insolence of impiety bears down all before it. This is proved in the sequel: a woman of ill repute, a sinner brought to an humbling sense of her state, hearing that Christ was at this house, ventured in, and at first stood behind him: but afterwards kneeling down, and probably hanging with her head over the feet of Christ as he sat, began to bathe them with her tears, to wipe them with her tresses, and to anoint them with the ointment she had brought with her. The Pharisee had evidently invited Christ in order to do honour to him as a Prophet; but he thought, that Christ as a Prophet ought to have known that this woman was a sinner, and as such to have repelled her. But the Redeemer saw her penitent, and by an apt parable explained this woman's present feelings, and the reasons of his own conduct. He shows the Pharisee, that a sense of pardoned sin will carry a person much farther in love to God than a religion which consists in mere attachment to outward forms; and he does this by contrasting the Pharisee's own conduct to his guest

with this woman's:—"I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." We learn hence, that the presenting of water to wash the feet, the kiss of salutation, and the anointing of the head of a guest, were all Jewish customs. Our Lord adds,—"Her sins which are many are forgiven her. And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Our love to the Saviour, then, will bear some proportion to the sense we have of the extent of his mercy in our forgiveness. Christ says of this woman, Her sins are many, but they are forgiven; she therefore loveth much. O that our obedience may be animated by a fervent love to Christ, both for his infinite excellency, and for the "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

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MARCH 15.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Matthew, xi. 7—19.

The celebrated individual here said to be more than a prophet, was sent to prepare the Jewish nation for the appearance of that Messiah whose coming had been announced by so many prophets, and waited for by so many kings and eminent saints, in all the changes through which, age after age, the Jewish nation had passed. He came also in a way most likely to be welcome to the Jews, as a devout person, eminent for those austerities which secure the approbation of mankind. His ministry and baptism were attended by vast multitudes, though he was so

decided in renouncing the honours of the Messiahship, and in pointing to Christ as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Further, his discourses were very searching, and well calculated to rouse the Jews from that worldly-mindedness and that confidence in their privileges, into which they were sunk. He assured them that God could raise up from the very stones children unto Abraham, and that now the axe was laid to the root of the tree, so that every tree which bare not good fruit, though it might have been planted in sacred ground, would be cut down, and cast into the fire. After all, the Jews were in no respect prepared for the appearance of the Messiah in the form Christ had assumed, nor for his discourses, nor for that kind of freedom which he came to proclaim. John was put to death: neither the voice of the people pronouncing him a prophet, nor the sanctity of his character, nor the temporary affection of the prince, availed to save him: that very prince became his murderer. Such is the treatment which persons possessing the greatest human perfection meet with in this vile world. See at what a small value wicked men estimate the lives, the blood of the saints: John was sacrificed to gratify a revengeful woman.

The Baptist delivered alarming truths to the Jews, vainly trusting in their descent, their prophets, their temple, and in the tokens of Divine favour bestowed on their pious ancestors. But these truths are equally applicable to me. Considering how I have undervalued an evangelical ministry, slighted the most interesting addresses from the pulpit, trifled away my sabbaths, and neglected the cultivation of the religion of the heart and of the closet, how justly might I be left to entire barrenness, and to consequent destruction! But spare, Lord, the cumberer of the ground, that he may bring forth fruit to thy glory. Enable him to draw life from his union to Christ, the Vine, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

## MARCH 16.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, x. 38—42.

The purport of this address to Martha must be plainly this;—The care of the soul, or an ardent desire of religious instruction, is important above all other important things; and outward comforts should be sacrificed to it. Martha's anxiety to accommodate the Saviour was, no doubt, the dictate of pure affection, and was therefore commendable; if Mary had spent that time which she might have devoted to the help of her sister, in any other secular pursuit, she would have deserved censure. But, as she appeared so deeply anxious to improve the time while Christ indulged them with his counsels and presence, she was not to be blamed. Perhaps, also, as our Lord was familiar with this family, he knew that Martha needed an exhortation of this kind, and that she was habitually too anxious about secular concerns.

In his spirituality, pastoral faithfulness, and self-denial, on this occasion, our Lord deserves the closest imitation of ministers when they visit the families of those committed to their care. Pastoral visits are highly necessary, and a most essential part of ministerial duty; but they will fail to be useful, unless conducted with much spirituality and faithfulness. Too often have ministers returned from these visits, bowed down with disappointment and guilt, partly through want of christian resolution in themselves, and partly through the prevalence of the disposition which Christ reproved in Martha, and among those whom they visited.

Let it be my concern, as a member of a christian church, to promote the visits of my pastor; to encourage him to renew these visits by freely opening to him the state of religion in my heart and in my family, and by listening to his advice and reproofs with

candour and humility. May I be careful not to take up too much of his time, and to avoid every subject which would unnecessarily pain his mind. In particular, let me abstain from all tale-bearing, and rather consult with him how the good of the church may be promoted, and the benefit of his labours extended.

Still, as Christ did not forbid Martha providing for his entertainment, so neither are members of christian churches forbidden unostentatiously to entertain their ministers; in this case, it should seem Christ needed the hospitalities of his friends, for he called at Martha's in a journey, and was, it is probable, both faint and weary.

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### MARCH 17.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, x. 25—37.

The human mind is always prone to push favourite theories too far; and this is not unfrequently the case with religious persons. Some persons perceive so forcibly the necessity of holiness to the existence of the christian character, that they are in danger of diminishing the value and necessity of faith; while others, perceiving the stress laid, in scripture, on faith, too little urge the necessity of holiness. Now we are sure, that each has its allotted place in the evangelical system; and he is a wise steward of the mysteries of God, who rightly divideth the word of truth. The danger of the Jews lay in this,—they gloried in their ancestors, they rested in their privileges, they neglected works of mercy, and they despised others. To correct this, our Lord relates this parable. The priest and the Levite passed by the wounded traveller, and would have left him to perish; but a despised Samaritan took pity on him, set him on his own beast, walked on foot himself, poured

ointment upon his wounds, and defrayed his expenses at the inn. This man, though a Samaritan, appeared to understand the Divine law better than either the priest or the Levite: he had pity on this Jewish traveller as his neighbour; but these Jews did not own him as such, although they constantly read the Divine law. It is a painful sight, when we observe men, very zealous for certain opinions, and for a particular ministry, outdone by the very atheists of the age in acts of benevolence.

But, surely, an earnest contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, does not exonerate us from seeking a Divine temper; seeing we are exhorted to grow up into Christ in all things, and to seek the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, as well as to "be found in him."

May it be my concern, therefore, while I fall with the deepest abasement at the foot of mercy; while I abhor myself, and seek for pardon and justification, to be bestowed as an act of sovereign grace in God through the Redeemer; while I aim at a life of faith upon the Son of God, and to win Christ and be found in him; not to forget, in my solicitude about my title to heaven, that I must "be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and that the more salvation is by grace through faith, the more I am bound to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things.

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MARCH 18.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, iii. 1—17.

This person appears three times in the history of our Lord Jesus Christ. At this time, when he came secretly by night, for the purpose of instruction; at the trial of Christ, when he endeavoured to disarm our Lord's enraged enemies; and again at his burial,

when he "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight," to embalm the body. From these circumstances, and from the nature of the discourse which our Lord addressed to him, we may place Nicodemus among the disciples. In this discourse the Saviour not only holds up the necessity of a birth unto righteousness, but opens to us the unbounded love of God to mankind in the gift of his Son, the means of obtaining salvation by faith, which he illustrates by an allusion to the brazen serpent, declaring, that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life: he further shows how the depravity of men would lead them to reject the light, because their deeds were evil. All these things Jesus Christ showed to a man who had not the courage to come to him by day; thus displaying his tenderness towards those whom many in our day would neglect as cowards; and thus fulfilling the prediction of Isaiah;—"A bruised reed shall he not break: and the smoking flax shall he not quench."

From some words in this discourse, many have thought that baptism was so requisite to salvation, that a person dying unbaptized must be lost;—"Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This idea, however, cannot be correct: the only absolutely necessary qualification for heaven, are, *faith*, making the merits of Christ ours, and *holiness*, making us meet to enjoy heaven. It is observable, that in the place where baptism and faith are united as preceding a state of salvation,—"*He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,*"—it is not added, *He that is not baptized, but he only that believeth not, shall be lost.* But perhaps our Lord here meant, by the term *water*, the *word of God*, which is spoken of again and again in scripture, as the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in producing that change which Christ calls a being born again. See John, xvii.

17; Ephesians, v. 26; 1 Peter, i. 23. — Except a man be born of the word and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

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MARCH 19.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, iv. 1—26.

This discourse was held in a place which presented many interesting recollections to the person fond of looking back to patriarchal times. The town of Sychar was near the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Respecting this ground, the historian says, Jacob bought the part of a field upon which he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred lambs; and he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel, that is, God, the God of Israel. Here were buried the bones of Joseph; and this woman says, that the well on which Jesus sat was dug by Jacob, who "drank thereof, himself, his children, and his cattle." Jesus sat on the edge of this well "being wearied with his journey." Little did good old Jacob think, when he was making this well, that he was forming a seat for the Messiah. Christ had not sat here long, before a woman of Samaria, whose character was far from being reputable, came to draw water. Jesus, determined to improve the time in which he was left alone by his disciples, who were gone into the city to bring food, said to the woman, Give me to drink. She, perceiving that he was a Jew, was surprised at the request; (for, the deep-rooted prejudices of the Jews prevented their having any intercourse with the Samaritans;) and delayed to give it him. He said, "If thou knewest the value of spiritual things, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water:" he would have bestowed upon thee the

water of life, of which he who drinketh shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman, like Nicodemus, was ready to ask,—“How can these things be? The well is deep; whence then hast thou this living water?” Our Lord, by proving to the woman that he knew her whole history, convinced her that he must be a Prophet; and this led her to ask him a question which had long perplexed both Jewish and Samaritan doctors,—it respected the relative sanctity of the mountain of Samaria and of Jerusalem. Christ taught her, that place is nothing; but that worshipping God in spirit and in truth is every thing. Still, however, he assured her, that the Messiah would come from the Jews. This poor woman was not ignorant that such a person was promised: she seems to have lived in the expectation of his coming, and not to have been without some idea of the nature of his character. “When he is come,” says she, “he will tell us all things.” Our Lord, in the most gracious manner, said to her, “I that speak unto thee am He.” She then left her water-pot, hastened into the city, and declared to the inhabitants that she had met with a person whom she supposed to be the Messiah. Many of the Samaritans came: they invited the Saviour to stay with them a day or two; and some, from the woman’s testimony, and others, from hearing the words of Christ themselves, believed; and thus a discourse, beginning with one hearer, ended in a large congregation, and the salvation of many souls.

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 MARCH 20.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, viii. 1—11.

What a dangerous attribute would omniscience be, if it could be possessed by a depraved being enjoying unlimited power! Could he know the hearts of all

around him, how flagitious, how miserable would he become! If Tiberius had known the hearts of all who hated him, and wished to conspire against him, how many more would have been sacrificed to his rage! If a person of the greatest urbanity, possessing the greatest desire of enjoying the friendship of others, could be invested with this attribute, how soon would he be converted into a misanthropist! But omniscience in Christ only assisted him in pitying and saving others. Here a woman was brought to him, said to have been caught in the commission of a crime for which the law enjoined the punishment of stoning to death. The intention of those who brought her was to ensnare Christ; and, decide which way he would, he must have been ensnared: had he pronounced her acquittal, he would have been charged with conniving at sin, and contradicting Moses; had he pronounced her guilty, he would have been charged before the civil power with assuming the authority of a judge. Knowing, (for he knew what was in man,) that the accusers were not innocent of the same crime, he stooped down as though he did not notice them; but they continuing the question, he raised himself up, and said, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. Self-condemned, they one by one retired, and left no one in the room but the woman and Jesus. He then raised himself up again, and said, Woman, hath no one condemned thee? And she said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; (as a judge;) go, and sin no more.

Here is great encouragement, not to continue in sin because grace abounds, but to hope for forgiveness, if, hating iniquity, we desire to sin no more. Our Lord says in another place,—“God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved:” in this instance, also, he acted in character. But in the last sentence of this person's dismissal, our Lord forcibly inculcated these lessons:—“Let every one that

nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy." "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." Grant, O Lord, that I may as heartily desire to be saved from the dominion as from the consequences of sin. May I long for holiness, as conformity to thy will, and as the very health and joy of my soul.

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MARCH 21.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, xiii. 1—17.

In the present day, at least, in some parts of the christian world, the preaching of the word is well attended; the discipline and doctrines of the church are carefully preserved; and zeal for the propagation of the gospel is warmly cherished. But those christian virtues which most adorn the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, love and humility, are far from flourishing. Nothing short of perfect affection, and a disposition to do the meanest offices for each other, comes up to the standard laid down in the New Testament. Nor should these tempers prevail among members of the same society merely, but be cultivated towards all who are in actual communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

With respect to the washing of the disciples' feet by our Lord Jesus Christ, there can be little doubt but that in countries where the inhabitants walk bare-foot, and constantly wash their feet after coming home, the injunction of Christ,—“If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet,” is binding; that is, whenever it would be an office of kindness to perform it. But in countries where this custom is not observed, perhaps the spirit of our Lord's example is alone binding.

What condescension is here! How far are we, though fellow-worms and fellow-sinners, from a disposition to follow this bright example! We are assuming state, and aiming to be accounted the greatest, while the King of kings is washing the feet of his disciples, his creatures. So struck was Peter with this act of unparalleled condescension, that he says to Christ,—“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” The Saviour rejoins,—“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” Then Peter, fearful of the consequences of remaining in a state of defilement, or of losing his part in Christ, says,—“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head.” Wash me in every part, rather than that I should lose my portion in thee.

O that I may never be content until I be grounded in humility; till I be so concerned at my own imperfections, that I am unable peevishly to notice those of my fellow-christians. O Lord, hasten thy kingdom, and so hasten it in its power, that, while sinners are converted in multitudes, the conduct of thy saints may bear the full impression of thine example.

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MARCH 22.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xx. 27—38.

Men are too apt to be elated by the honours attached to ancestry, and the dignity of their blood; and when a man has descended from those who were eminent for talents, or for success in lawful enterprises, or for piety, he has reason for exultation; but neither greatness nor goodness descends by blood: hence the Evangelist John says, Christians (“the highest style of man”) are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Their Divine birth is ascribed by the Evangelist John to the Holy Spirit, through the word, represented

by the term water. They receive a new disposition:—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." God himself becomes their Teacher;—"All thy children shall be taught of God." They have glorious titles assigned them, and "are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Angels attend upon them; and are therefore called "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They are heirs of God, and are sealed with "the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance." They are called joint-heirs with Christ; and their "inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." They desire this better, this heavenly country,—“wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

If this be the case, let me ask, Whether I have any ground to hope that I am a new creature? Do I seek to be led by the word and Spirit of God? Do I pray for Divine teaching and guidance; and do I now choose affliction with the people of God rather than the pleasures of sin in the most exalted situations on earth? O Lord, send "the Spirit of thy Son into my heart," as the Spirit of adoption.

If these glorious distinctions belong to the man who is a true Christian, how then should he labour to walk worthy of his high calling! How heavenly should be his conversation, seeing he has communion with God as his Father! How anxiously should he desire those influences which can alone make him meet for his inheritance among the saints in light! How dear should home be to him! With what holy indifference should he pass through this sinful, dying world!

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### MARCH 23.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xxii. 24—30.

Since the fall, pride and sensuality have been the two predominant sins in the world. Pride soon crept

into the christian church: even among the apostles themselves, before Christ had left them;—"there was a strife, which of them should be accounted the greatest;" and this contention arose just after the celebration of the Lord's supper, and after our Lord had been declaring that he should be delivered into the hands of men. Since that time, the disputes, intrigues, and quarrels for the pre-eminence, among persons elevated among Christians, have excited the disgust and abhorrence of the whole christian world.

To correct this evil in his disciples, our Lord Jesus reminds them, that the christian church is not to be like the political institutions of men:—"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them;" (the Gentiles;) "but ye shall not be so." Your ministry is to resemble mine, and it is surely sufficient if the servant be as his Lord. Behold, then, I am among you as one that serveth. And he that is chief among you, let him be as he that doth serve. To correct this evil still more decidedly, our Lord took a young child, and set him in the midst of these ambitious fishermen, and said,—“He that is least among you all, the same shall be great.”

The true way, then, to be great among the followers of Christ, in his estimation, is, to cultivate real humility, and to serve others by our example,—our disinterested labours. What ground for lamentation it is, that these precepts are not more unfeignedly regarded, nor more exactly followed, in churches comparatively pure! O that it may be my steadfast aim ever to cultivate the lowest opinion of my own attainments, to be ready at all times to serve the humblest of Christ's followers, and always to esteem others better than myself.

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MARCH 24.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, v. 17—24.

The joys and sorrows of an irreligious man are all founded on the prosperous or adverse scenes of this life.

The total apathy to any interest in God, or eternity, into which he so habitually sinks, is equally shocking and wonderful. All the thoughts, all the conversation, and all the connexions of such a person are confined to this world. If he appear in a place intended to remind him of other beings and of another state, he either courts repose, or wanders among worldly subjects. If he meet a man who entertains the thoughts of eternity, he shuns him. If he lay his hand on a book that would remind him that the world is deceptive, that this life is a vapour, and that eternity is at hand, he lays it down. To acquire bodily comforts, he undertakes the most arduous labours; and, if he wish any thing he acquires to survive him, it is only that his name may live upon earth. If he found a charity-school, he has no thought of training up the young for eternity: he expects the objects of his charity may be better fitted to labour for the meat that perishes, and that he himself may acquire a posthumous fame. The education and settlement of his children are conducted upon the same principles; nor has he a single wish, or one cherished thought, that extends beyond the existence of the body. Thus "man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." As described by the Psalmist, these are "the men of the world, whose portion is in this life."

The seventy returned, full of joy that they were capable of performing wonders beyond the powers of their fellow-men. But Christ gently corrects their mistake, and points out to them the only joy befitting an immortal being;—"Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Such be my joy; and while I hold all earthly good in the estimation which it deserves as the gift of God, may I be preserved from those inordinate cares, and that excessive attachment to earth, which will rob me of higher joys, lay the foundation of future snares and sorrows, debase my spirit, and dishonour my

God, O may I ever be enabled to say,—“Thou art my portion, O Lord.”

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MARCH 25.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, vi. 53—69.

In the mind of every Christian there is a real preference of Christ to every other object. He is often solicited to alter his choice, and he has within him inclinations which would draw him aside, and tempt him to forget the excellencies of the Redeemer, and the vows by which he has bound himself to him. But he rejects all these allurements, and says with David and Peter,—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee;” “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!”—Even at a stake, where he suffers the loss of all things for Christ, amidst the blazing faggots, he says,—“None but Christ,—none but Christ.”

The believer is induced to make this preference, not as under the influence of heated feelings, or of an irrational enthusiasm, but he acts from the most solid considerations.

He sees in Christ excellencies and properties which can make him truly blessed; but which he cannot find in what is called the world. Christ can make him internally happy:—“He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst;” and this happiness our Saviour secures to him for ever by the sanctification of his nature.

He has found in the fashions, amusements, friendships, and conversation, of the world, something which has certainly fascinated and intoxicated him, but nothing to make him solidly and permanently happy. On the other hand, he has found much insipidity, much insincerity, and much mischief, in his

intercourse with the creatures. But the happiness which he has found in Christ and religion has satisfied, raised, and solidly improved his spirit.

Finally, he knows that Christ alone can save him from everlasting death. He is quite sure, that there is no other way, no other refuge, no other Saviour; and equally sure, that a life devoted to the body and to the world must end in disappointment. Well may he therefore say,—“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!”

This, O my soul, be thy resolution, to cleave unto Christ with purpose of heart. Creatures fade,—friendships deceive,—the fashion of this world passeth away,—and snares and dangers meet thee every where but in the narrow way.

“Thou, my all!

My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!  
 My strength in age! my rise in low estate!  
 My soul's ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!  
 My light in darkness! and my life in death!  
 My boast through time! bliss through eternity!  
 Eternity, too short to speak thy praise!  
 Or fathom thy profound of love to man!”

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### MARCH 26.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, viii. 21—36.

Civil liberty, however great a good, like all other earthly blessings, can be enjoyed only for a very limited period; and it becomes a good, in exact proportion to the moral capacity of the person to enjoy it. But the liberty which Christ bestows is spiritual, and with it is connected a capacity to appreciate its value.

It is a freedom from the bondage of guilt; the slavish fear before felt is removed, and the person approaches God, having a sweet sense of forgiveness in his conscience. Thus the fetters of unbelief and

despair are broken off, and the child of freedom walks at large in all the ways of religion, agreeably to the words of the apostle ;—“ We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption.”

Such a person is delivered “ from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.” Sin has no more dominion over him ; as he is not under the law, but under grace. Those sins to which he had been so long enslaved, reign no more ; and, though he complains of inward corruption, and of outward imperfections, as a person oppressed, he maintains the warfare, and comes off more than conqueror.

He is set free from subjection to Satan, and is no longer led captive by him at his will. The prince of the power of the air has ceased to rule in him. He obeys his new Master, the Lord Jesus ; and under him, fights the good fight of faith ; Christ himself supporting him, and enabling him effectually to resist his adversary.

He once was the slave of the opinions, modes, and lying vanities of the world ; but now he follows none except as far as they follow Christ. He is carried forward no longer by the multitude, but dares to be singular, and is of good cheer, knowing that his Saviour has overcome the world.

Finally, he is delivered from all religious slavery. Henceforth, he calls no man Master but Jesus Christ. He examines the Divine rule for himself, and thanks the Head of the church for delivering him from all that spiritual tyranny to which so many are still subject, and to resist which so many martyrs have bled, and so many confessors have suffered the loss of all things. All this is only the prelude to that state of everlasting exemption from the bondage of corruption, which awaits him in the worlds of light and liberty above.

## MARCH 27.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, vi. 20—26.

“Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” How wonderful, that God should first send the news of pardon to the murderous Jews; should bless them first who as a nation had most grievously and most recently offended him!

Men in general have decided that a man is happy in proportion to the sum total of pleasure he can enjoy, which, in other words, often means, in proportion to the number of sins he can commit. The decision of the Divine word is, that men are blessed in exact proportion to their being turned from iniquity. How does the real matter of fact stand?—

Sin never fails to bring guilt upon the conscience, and this brings anxiety and distress into the soul: this is the natural and necessary fruit of sin, as every one grown up to maturity knows by wretched experience.

Sin also hardens the heart, and prepares it for the commission of other and greater crimes; and though, after reiterated acts of sin, there may be less uneasiness and alarm; yet the person is but treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and making awful preparations for death and eternity.

Further, many sins introduce weakness and disease into the body; so much so, that numbers do not live half their days, and many of those days are spent in pining sickness, brought on in some instances by a course of iniquity, and in others, by a single act of transgression.

A sinner not only brings distress upon himself, but it is the very nature of iniquity to injure others. Some are utterly deceived for time and eternity by evil example. And whole families, servants, and

dependants, live in a state of constant misery through the sins and evil tempers of the heads of families.

But sin, while it thus makes miserable individuals and families, fills the earth with misery. See whole nations groaning under the tyranny and cruelty of one man. See others devoted to slavery, poverty, ignorance, and superstition, by the craft of spiritual tyrants; others led into war and havock, which are followed by taxes, the loss of trade, poverty, failures, frauds, thefts, murders, imprisonments, suicides, and violent ignominious deaths.

To all this succeed the horrors of dissolution, unmitigated by one ray of christian hope.

Surely then to be turned from iniquity is the greatest of all blessings: and hence the gift of Christ is called an unspeakable gift, since he came to turn us from sin and misery, and bring us into the way of happiness and salvation.

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MARCH 28.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xii. 35—48.

To be prepared for death, the greatest of all human calamities, is the happy lot of every Christian, since he is found in Christ, having on the righteousness of God in him. But there may be much difference between this and the possession of that frame of mind which makes death a welcome messenger; and this is not to be obtained without christian watchfulness, the necessity of which our Lord here powerfully enforces.

This watchfulness implies, that the person is careful to have his affections happily loosened from the world; for without this he will not be willing to leave it. Bound by those ties in their full strength, he must be torn piece-meal from the earth; and in such a case how unfit either to meet death, or to enter upon the joys which are at God's right hand!

It further implies, that there is no guilt oppressing the conscience, but that the person has "washed his garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is faith in the Redeemer, as "the Foundation God has laid in Zion,"— as the "Propitiation for our sins,"— as "the Lord our Righteousness,"— as our "Advocate with the Father," which can alone remove the fear of death, by removing guilt from the conscience, and by giving us a good hope through grace.

But without a heavenly mind, our preparation is not complete; that is, we cannot long to depart, and to be with Christ as far better than any portion in the present world.

All this is implied in that watchfulness which our Lord Jesus Christ here inculcates. The argument which he urges to enforce the necessity of being thus ready, is, the uncertainty of life:—"Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

The apostle speaks of it as the posture of mind common to the primitive Christians, that they continued, "looking for, and hastening to, the day of God," like persons anxiously pressing to a desired object. O that this may be my frame! May I not act like those who say,— "Where is the promise of his coming?" but like those who consider him as at the very door; and in this posture may I say with David,— "Now, Lord, what wait I for? Truly my hope is in thee."

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### MARCH 29.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xiii. 1—9.

Repentance signifies a change of mind, including what the scripture calls "sorrow after a godly sort." When used respecting the Almighty, it simply means a change in his dispensations. In Judas it was a mere

compunction and alarm, connected with "the sorrow of the world which worketh death."

That repentance which is "unto life, and which needeth not to be repented of," may include more or less of sorrow; but a change of mind is absolutely necessary to its existence.—"Godly sorrow," says the apostle, "*worketh* repentance." Sorrow comes first, and then it produces repentance, or a change of mind;—"For," adds the apostle, "behold, this same thing, your being grieved out of respect to God, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

The great Author of this change is said to be Jesus Christ, who is "exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins," and who uses various means to accomplish this great work, this change in our ideas and feelings.

This repentance, or change of mind, our Lord Jesus Christ pronounces to be necessary to all, to the moral as well as the profane; for no one loves spiritual things by nature.—"God commandeth all men every where to repent;" and our Lord in this discourse says, Not only did those Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, need repentance, but I say unto you, though you seem to be astonished at their guilt,—"*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

Since repentance signifies a change of mind, which change none but the Almighty can give, as is further manifest by what the apostle says to Timothy;—"If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth;" how dangerous it must be to defer this change to a dying hour, to those days and nights of bodily anguish, to those hurrying moments when the soul is driven away into eternity!

God grant that my repentance may not be delayed till that hour of alarm and extremity come. May I

now behold by faith the goodness of God, especially in the gift and sufferings of the Redeemer, and may this lead me to repentance. But, O Lord, my heart is hard, my will is stubborn and depraved. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. Show me the evil of my ways, the plague of my heart, the ingratitude of my conduct, and the dishonour which I have done to thy holy name, that I may abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

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MARCH 30.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—John, vi. 41—58.

The substitution of Christ in the place of the culprit man, is taught us by the whole economy of Jewish sacrifices, and in every part of the New Testament. But here we are taught another doctrine respecting Christ—that the existence and perpetuity of religion in the mind arise from the constant exercise of faith upon him. This is the doctrine taught us by the participation of the bread and wine, the symbols of his body and blood, being essential to the proper reception of the Lord's supper, as in the passover the lamb was to be eaten by all the families of Israel. Some persons might have thought it sufficient to have looked and meditated upon these emblems; but the words of the institution are,—“Take, eat.” The same ideas are communicated in those words,—“Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, ye have no life in you. He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” And in this part of the Gospel of John, our Lord, in allusion to the manna, says,—“I am the Bread of Life: my Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven; for, the Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst.” In allusion to these and similar

passages, the apostle says,—“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

Christ then is our Life, as we owe to him our deliverance from death; as he quickens us when dead in trespasses and sins; and as this spiritual life is preserved in us by receiving the communications of his grace through faith and prayer. This life, imparted by the Lord Jesus, is the commencement of eternal life:—“As I live, ye shall live also. I give unto them eternal life.”

When the disciples heard Christ thus speaking of himself as the Bread of Life, they said,—“Lord, evermore give us this bread.” I would join them in this petition:—O Lord, I am all death; I possess no symptoms of Divine life but as thou art pleased to quicken me by the spirit of life. Thou art the Resurrection and the Life. Grant that in holy breathings of desire, in holy affections, and in a life of active benevolence, I may live to him who died for me and rose again. And at length, “being filled with all the fullness of God, may I be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”—Ephesians, iii. 18, 19.

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MARCH 31.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xi. 1—10.

The Lord's prayer directs our attention to those things of which we ought never to lose sight in our prayers to God. It naturally divides itself into six parts: the first relates to the manner of our approach; the four next parts contain petitions respecting the coming of the Divine kingdom, the supply of our daily wants, the forgiveness of our trespasses, and

deliverance from evil. The last part is an ascription of praise.

Nothing could be more concise, more full, or more appropriate. With respect to the controversy grafted on this specimen of prayer, it becomes those who use forms, and those who do not use them, to feel great tenderness towards each other; since both methods have conveyed, with a Divine fervour, the desires of thousands and thousands of the most eminent saints in almost every age of the church, to the throne of God. It is the spirit of prayer, the internal desire, at which the Almighty looks; and without which, the most correct form, as well as the most fluent extemporaneous address, will be utterly rejected. One sigh from a broken heart, one groan from a burdened sinner, one heartfelt expression in lamentation for sin, is more acceptable to the Almighty than all sacrifices and all gifts.

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### APRIL 1.

*Scripture selected for the day.*—Luke, xi. 1—13.

“Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.” By this introduction to the Lord’s prayer, we are taught to approach the Divine throne with the deepest reverence, hallowing that great, that awful name on which we call, a name which all our inward powers ought to adore. Indeed, if solemn worship is ever becoming, it is then most so, when we come into the presence of God, and presume, not to speak concerning him, but to address our words immediately to his Majesty. The meanness of our earthly origin, the depth of our depravity and perfidy, and our utter abjectness and misery, loudly call for this reverence and godly fear. Levity and insincerity are never so detestable as in the act of drawing near to God. Our very words and gesture should be proofs