

the present day men should assist the grand adversary in propagating that delusion which in the first instance ruined the world :—"Ye shall not surely die." O that it may be our concern, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," to persuade men to flee from this wrath to come ! And, O for gratitude equal to our obligations ! How greatly should we rejoice, that there will be in eternal duration, opportunity given for the most transporting recollections of the Divine goodness, and for everlasting praise !

MAY 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, iv. 1—21.

It might have been expected, considering the dignity of the person of Christ, that God's love in sending his Son to save us from perishing would have excited universal and constant admiration. Yet the public entry of a foreign ambassador into a city excites more interest in the crowd than the coming of our Saviour into the world.

To whom is he sent ? To men in general, to all as lost ; but he is sent more particularly,—1. To the weary ; to those, who, labouring under a heavy burden of guilt, are saying with David,—“ Mine iniquities have gone over my head as a burden too heavy for me to bear.”—2. He is sent to the hungry and thirsty ; to those who find that nothing short of the Divine favour can satisfy their vast desires, and who faint for that bread which cometh down from heaven, and for that water which springeth up into everlasting life.—3. To the poor ; to those destitute in their own opinion of all religious merit, and of all ability to save themselves, who are glad to receive Divine help, and salvation as flowing from the unmerited grace of God.—4. To the captives ; to those who feel the galling load of sin, and seek deliverance

from their prison house. — 5. To the broken-hearted; not to those whose sorrows are excited by worldly losses; but to those who mourn “after a godly sort,” whose hearts are broken with grief on account of the number and magnitude of their offences, and because these offences have been committed against God, and have produced such ruinous effects to themselves and others.

But it may be asked, Why should the Almighty require even a broken heart? It may be answered, To destroy the fascinations of sin and the world; to cast down high thoughts of our own merits and ability; to make a man feel the importance of religion; to prepare the heart for the good seed; to produce holy fear, submission, and a humble walk before God and man; to make men desire with all the heart, the assistance, the atonement, the righteousness, of the Redeemer; and to prepare the soul to ascribe in the songs of eternity, the honour of all its salvation to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That a broken heart answers all these important ends in religion, we may infer from the way in which it is spoken of in the Divine word;—“The sacrifices of God are a broken-heart.” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and that trembleth at my word.” What an errand of mercy was that on which Christ came:—“He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted!”

MAY 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xxi. 9—25.

How affectionate, how pathetic are the farewell discourses of Jesus Christ. We find nothing like them, (especially as it respects the spirit in which they were delivered,) in any human composition. In the close of this gospel the apostle gives us reason to

believe that much of what Jesus Christ said and did while on earth, remains unrecorded; and it is observable, that the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of this gospel occur in it alone,—the subjects contained in them being unnoticed by the other Evangelists. It is not at all unreasonable to expect, therefore, that we shall have still more made known to us in a future state of the miracles and discourses of the Redeemer.

“Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father’s house are many mansions.” Jesus Christ here offers to the meditations of his disciples the kingdom of heaven, as a proper subject to assuage their griefs.—
1. Every true Christian is in sorrow, more or less, under a continual sense of his proneness to evil; and he groans and is in heaviness through manifold temptations. Nor is he free from sorrow on account of the spiritual state of many of his friends, and of a world lying in wickedness:—“Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.”—
2. He mourns over the imperfection of all human society, over the coldness and the differences of Christians.—
3. He suffers under personal bodily afflictions.—
4. He sorrows on account of the deficiency of his knowledge, especially as it respects the Divine perfections, and the wonders of creation, providence, and redemption.—
5. He mourns further that he attains to so small a conformity to the Divine image, enjoys so little of the Divine presence, and does so little for the glory of the Redeemer.

But in the place which Christ is gone to prepare for him, all these grounds of sorrow will be removed; and he will be perfect even as his heavenly Father; that is, he will be absolutely perfect as man, while his heavenly Father is so as God. He will enjoy the Divine presence for ever: and will be ardently employed in serving the Almighty, and glorifying him for ever. Thus the Redeemer, in drawing the attention of his disciples heaven-wards, introduced a subject full of consolation.

It has been observed, that our Lord Jesus Christ conversed on the subject of heaven with a familiarity which showed that he had just come thence. He prepares the place for the eternal abode of his people, and this very circumstance will endear heaven exceedingly to all the redeemed. In the Hindoo homestead are separate erections for the different branches of the family. By "many mansions" did our Lord mean to refer to such a state of primitive society!

MAY 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, vii.
21—29.

Mankind are always ready to praise talents, to praise the person who is well acquainted with the subject which he handles, the business which he follows, or the science which he studies. They cannot bear a superficial character in any thing, except religion; and there the least knowledge, the least feeling, and the least ardour, are more than enough.

We profess to be Christians, and, while looking at a miserable Hindoo prostrate before his dumb idol, we perhaps glory in the name; but are we then Christians? Do we not profess a religion in which we feel no interest, and to the joys and hopes of which we are utter strangers?

1. We believe in the existence of a holy, just, and merciful God; but do we reverence him as holy? Do we fear him as just? Do we trust him as merciful? If not, in what are we better than downright atheists?—2. We believe that Christ is the appointed Saviour: but, if Christ is not honoured and trusted as a Saviour, and we are not benefited by his coming into the world, then are we no Christians, whatever else we may be.—3. We believe that the

Holy Spirit gives assistance to repent, believe, and obey: but do we seek that assistance?—4. We believe in the necessity of repentance: but do we seek it, meditating on the number of our sins, on their turpitude, and on their injurious consequences?—5. We believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a last judgment: but are we preparing to meet these tremendous events, by placing ourselves in circumstances in which we may triumph over the tomb, and exult in the coming of the Great Judge?—6. We believe that there will be rewards and punishments after death, which will be eternal: but are we giving a diligent attention to those things which may secure to us the one, and save us from the other? If not, all the gracious provision for our salvation made in the christian economy will avail us nothing.

He who is a doer of the word, an experimental and practical Christian, he is happy: happy in the favour of God, in the tranquillity of his conscience, and in the prospect of eternal blessings. His end will be happy:—"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

There are some professors who have a large share of christian knowledge, and make great pretensions to faith, but pay no regard to christian conduct: these are to expect a miserable destruction of all their hopes, like the man who built his house upon the sand.

MAY 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xv. 13—27.

When a Christian looks into a world like this, or into the state of those individuals in whose happiness he feels deeply interested, how much he longs for the more general diffusion of those influences which are so essential to the renovation of the human mind!

These influences prepare the heart to become the habitation of God; for, this Divine Agent removes the insensibility and unbelief of the heart, and subdues the will. He is the Source of regeneration, for men are said to be "born of the Spirit;" the Fountain of life, for, "the Spirit quickeneth;" and the Source of grace, for he is called "the Spirit of grace." He teaches to profit, and leads the willing disciple into all truth. His lessons are imprinted on the heart, and make men wise unto salvation. Whatever good the Christian derives from Christ,—“who is made unto his people Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption,” the Holy Spirit conveys these blessings to the mind, and to his influences all progress in the Divine life is to be ascribed.

But these influences are needful on all occasions: in times of conflict and temptation; in affliction, in depression, in persecution, and in death; we need His aid, who is called “the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.”

He is, lastly, the Source of all Gifts: all the capacity which any possess to edify others, and to advance the kingdom of Christ upon earth, comes from God the Holy Spirit.

It will appear evident, therefore, that this is a gift necessary to all; so necessary, that without it there is no spiritual life, no power to become the sons of God, no growth in grace, no strength to meet extraordinary trials, no capacity of doing good to others.

The willingness of the Almighty to give this blessing, is unquestionable: he has given his Son to die for us: will he not therefore give his Spirit to apply salvation to our hearts? You can confide in a parent to bestow a good which will not impoverish him; believe, then, that God will give you this Holy Guide to make Christ and heaven secure to you. Ask, importunately ask; and then verily this blessing which seals you to the day of eternal redemption, will be yours.

MAY 5.

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

As malice and hatred mark the character of fallen angels, so benevolence distinguishes that of the elect angels. In patriarchal times they frequently brought messages from heaven to earth. They are declared to be all “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.” One of them appeared to Zacharias, another to Mary, others to the shepherds, to Joseph, and to Christ during his temptation; they will all come with Christ to judgment; and it is said, that they desire to look into the mysteries of redemption. There is something very remarkable in the declaration of our Lord, relative to the effect of the repentance of men on the minds of angels. All heaven seems to be moved whenever an event takes place. We do not read of any extraordinary emotion there on account of any other event which has ever happened on earth. Why, then, should this circumstance, the turning of a sinner, or a change of mind in one individual, move all heaven, and produce an increase of joy in a place where there is joy for evermore?—1. It is an undoing, as far as it is possible, of that which is infinitely wrong, and the doing of that which beyond every thing is right. There must be something unspeakably evil in the nature of sin, as it is so offensive in the sight of God, as it destroys the purity and happiness of the mind, injures others most deeply, and ruins the sinner for ever. The repentance of a sinner opens the way for glorifying, in his salvation, all the Divine perfections,—the justice, the mercy, the power, and the wisdom of God; and at the same time, prepares the person to enjoy the largest communications of the Divine benevolence.—3. It is a fruit of the travail or bitter sufferings of the Redeemer, and is graciously considered as a part of the reward of these sufferings.

Such a saved sinner will be eternally indebted to Christ, and will join the angels in the song of the Lamb.—4. It is the turning point upon which is suspended the everlasting happiness or misery of the individual.

All these things may be supposed to operate on the minds of the benevolent angels, when they thus rejoice over the repenting sinner; and they do indeed make the conversion of an individual an interesting object on the earth,—explaining the anxiety of Christians to win men, and to persuade them to turn to God. A life of sin can be attributed only to something like insanity, without that right to our compassion which the lunatic justly claims. Can a person deserve the character of a reasonable creature, whose plan of life includes a marked preference of the interests of the body to those of the soul, who prefers the things which are momentary to those which are eternal, who endeavours to subvert the Divine order in the creation of man, who maintains actual hostilities against Omnipotence, and rushes into eternal ruin? That this deserves no better name than madness, is generally acknowledged on a death-bed; it is always acknowledged in the hour of conversion; the awakened sinner owns that he has been feeding on ashes, and that he was perishing with hunger, while, in his father's house, there was bread enough and to spare. The prodigal is said to have "come to himself," or to his right mind, when he resolved to go to his father, and acknowledge his sin. By this expression we are to understand, that he came to a right knowledge of his condition, and of his real interests, which no one who continues in a state of sin can possess. And yet how many charge real Christians with enthusiasm and madness! While, on the plain ground of reason and common sense, unless the Bible be a palpable deception; the fact is, that those who enter into religion with a seriousness as deep as the nature of the subject requires, are the only persons in the world who act upon consistent principles. Is it

madness to abandon ruinous principles and conduct? Is it madness to make God our Friend? Is it madness to build our hopes for eternity on the promises of the true and living God? Is it madness to obey God rather than follow the principles of the world? Is it madness to prepare for a state which is to have no end? Boast not then of thy reason, O man of the world, and pretend not that thy Bible contains things thou canst not believe, when thy whole plan of existence is marked with nothing but folly and desperation.

MAY 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, ii. 1—17.

The character of Christ as a Saviour regards men as involved in certain circumstances; and those who trust in him have been brought to know, that they are in these circumstances, and to feel genuine concern at the discovery. By this apology of our Lord for going among sinners, we are taught that sin is a spiritual disease, and that he is the good Physician; and a little reflection will soon convince us that the effects of sin on the mind fully justify this comparison.—This is one of the effects of sin, that it deceives the sinner; makes him *blind* to his misery, and places him in a state of spiritual darkness:—"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Sinners are said to be like the *deaf* adder:—"Hearing, they hear, but do not understand." They are charged with having no appetite, no desire, for the blessings of the gospel: hence Christ denounces a woe against such as "are full."—"When we were *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Finally, sinners are said to be *dead* in trespasses and sins. The good Physician imparts new life by his Spirit; and then, in the application of

the means, increases and perfects that life, till it springs up into eternal life.

Many consider themselves as having no wants while the body is amply provided for; and as having no disease while the body is in health. But the gospel has absolutely no meaning, unless we consider men as standing in need of a Saviour to deliver them from distress and misery. For instance, it is said, that Christ heals the *broken-hearted*; delivers the *captives*; gives rest to the *heavy-laden*; that he is a Mediator, to interpose between us and the justice of God; that he bore the curse to which we were exposed; that he is the good Shepherd, to recover those who had gone astray. Water is good: to whom? To the thirsty. Christ is good; he is the Pearl of great price, the Treasure hid in the field, God's unspeakable Gift; but to whom? To the awakened, the impoverished, the perishing, the repenting sinner. He is a Refuge; but a refuge supposes danger and alarm; and till this danger and alarm be felt in the conscience, Christ will never be known as a Saviour; never be trusted; never be precious; never be obeyed.

In the words before us, our Lord appears thus to reason:—‘I am not among sinners as a sinner, but as a physician among his patients.—“I am come to seek and to save that which was lost.” But you are not aware of your need of me; you consider yourselves as in a state of perfect health;—“you are alive without the law;” “you say that ye see, therefore your sin remaineth.”’—It is an unspeakable mercy to know that we need the blessings of salvation; for without this knowledge how should we seek them, how could we enjoy them!

MAY 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, iii. 14—36.

There is one thing which forms a drawback against the advantages of making the Holy Scriptures a

school-book : it makes some of the most beautiful and wonderful passages and expressions of that Divine Book so familiar, that in mature life, much of their force is broken and lost. The force of the comparison in these words (verse 14) cannot be felt except by a person whose ideas of sin resemble those of Jesus Christ. Transgression to sinners is so pleasant, that they do not sleep except they have fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; but to a holy being, sin is frightful as death. What is it in the presence of angels, and of Christ, whose blood it cost to atone for it ? Whatever our eyes can fix upon as painful and shocking in history, on the flood, on Sodom, on the destruction of the Canaanites, and of Jerusalem, or on the tragic scenes of more modern times, all is to be laid at the door of sin : sin has done all. Whatever our eyes see that is painful in the world,—that hospital, that lunatic asylum, that jail, that gibbet : sin has created these. Whatever is terrible in futurity, this also is to be laid at the door of sin. Our Lord here considers sin as a mortal poison, spreading its contagion through the whole frame, and bringing on spiritual, temporal, and eternal death. And what it does individually, it does for all : all have sinned, and all are perishing : nor does christian birth, or baptism, or education, change the scene. These things being trusted in, like the incantations of the heathen, repeated over persons bit by ten serpents, prevent the application of the real remedy, and thus ensure the destruction of the victim who has already begun to perish.

Where then is the remedy ? Say, ye moralists. The man is ruined already by his works : and will you recommend any further reliance on his own powers ? The death of Christ, as lifted up upon the cross, is the only antidote, the only preventative from perishing by the poison of sin. This death removes the sinner's guilt, and introduces him into the favour of God ; prevents the ruinous effects of sin, and procures sanctification, whereby the soul is fitted for

eternal life. These blessings are procured, when faith lifts up her eyes; when in prayer, in the reading of the word, and in the means provided for the application of the remedy, Christ is looked to as crucified for us. This is the man that shall get free, even he who looks to Christ with the same earnestness, and the same hope, as the Israelites exercised, when they looked up to the brazen serpent: he shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Is it doubted whether sin will operate as a deadly poison? We need not go far for proof. Has it not already poisoned our comforts, our friendships, all human intercourse, our health, and every pleasure of life? Does not Christ himself here treat man as perishing? And does he not rest the necessity of his own death upon the fact that men are perishing? Does not the provision of a remedy by a Physician who cannot err, assuredly imply that the disease is real?

MAY 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, i. 19—34.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” These words were delivered by John the Baptist, as our Lord Jesus one day was approaching him. He meant to say, ‘Behold the Passover Lamb, whose blood, sprinkled upon the conscience, is to be the means of your escape from the angel of destruction in the day of God’s vengeance:—

“I will retire beneath the cross;
Saviour, at thy dear feet I lie!
And the keen sword that Justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.”

Behold him in whom terminate all your sacrifices, but especially the offering of the scape-goat which

typically bore away the sins of the children of Israel into a land not inhabited: all that the Divine Law-giver designed by that ceremony will be realized by the obedience and death of the distinguished person whom I thus point out to your attention. Behold in him also your mercy-seat: for through him, and him alone, your prayers can be heard, and the mercy of God enjoyed: his merits form the true incense which fills the holy of holies, and is offered before the mercy-seat. He is also your "High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Aaron went with the blood of others into the holy place; but this glorious High Priest shall enter into heaven itself, and there appear in that body which will be made a sacrifice for sin, and will for ever live to make intercession for us. Behold in him Joshua, your great Leader; this Joshua shall introduce all the true Israel of God into the heavenly Canaan. See in him also your cities of refuge; avenging Justice will not pursue those who are interested by faith in this your Messiah. He is also the Antitype of your manna; for he will give his flesh for the life of the world;—of that rock, which, on being smitten, gave drink to your fathers in the wilderness;—"They drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ;"—and of the brazen serpent, for, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Thus this forerunner of Christ, had circumstances permitted so clear an exposure, might have gone through the whole economy, and have shown how the whole of that economy terminated upon him whom he called "the Lamb of God."—How interesting an employment it will be to the Jews, when converted, to trace the whole of their religion in the life and death of Jesus Christ! What noble subjects for a converted Jewish preacher to a congregation of converted Jews! He will find Christ every where. How precious a part of the Divine word are all these now

obsolete ceremonies; what light they throw upon the mysteries of redemption!

MAY 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ezekiel, xxiv.
11—23.

“I am the good Shepherd.” The principal duties of a shepherd are, that he should know his flock, at least, their number; should go before them, and lead them to proper pasturage; bring them back to the fold; continue with them; prevent any from straying; tenderly watch over the ewes with young, and the lambs; and, at the hazard of his own life, protect them from the wolf and other enemies.

Now all these properties are found in Christ, the good Shepherd. He knows his flock; he has ever known them; they were given to him by his heavenly Father before the world was. He knows them altogether, their wants, their weaknesses, and their dangers; hence he says,—“I know them, and they follow me.” He leads them to green pastures, and beside the still waters: and he encloses them in the fold, his church, whereby they are protected in inclement seasons, and during the night. Hence the Prophet Isaiah says,—“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.” He giveth them also under-shepherds, who “feed them with knowledge and understanding.”—“Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” As it is the duty of a good shepherd to abide with, and watch over his flock, so our Lord says,—“I will never leave thee.” He keeps his flock together, and prevents grievous wolves from coming in to scatter them. He also prevents their going astray, or restores them. Hence it is written,—“I will gather the remnant of my flock, and bring them back again to their fold.”

Does a shepherd tenderly care for the weak of his

flock? The Prophet Isaiah says of Christ,—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young:" the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus abundantly shows how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in him.

A good shepherd exposes his life for the sheep. To save us from our sin and guilt, from the avenging justice of God, and from Satan who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, Christ not only risked, but sacrificed his life. Hence they are a purchased flock:—"Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Thus the good Shepherd preserves his flock from all harm and loss, and will at length gather them into the heavenly fold, beyond the reach of all dangers.

MAY 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xii. 1—12.

"I am the true Vine." Our Lord's metaphors were generally taken from the scenery around him, or from facts well known to his auditors; in calling himself "a Vine," and his disciples "the branches," he employed a representation with which all were familiar. The vineyard is the church; Christ is the Vine; believers are the branches; the Father, the Husbandman.

The truths which our Lord here means to teach, are, That he is the Source of grace; that all fruitfulness depends upon union to him; that the Father prunes those who are united to him, to enable them to bring forth more fruit; and cuts off and consigns to destruction unfruitful branches.

May these important truths be indelibly engraved on my mind. May I so depend on the grace of Christ, as to undertake nothing without seeking his special

assistance. In faith, in affection, and in a warm devotedness of heart, may I be so united to Christ, that all he says may be influential upon me; and by all he does may I be sanctified, so as to be made "a partaker of the Divine nature." May I be willing to pass through all that discipline which my heavenly Father sees necessary to make me bring forth more of the fruits of righteousness; and may I dread being found as a withered branch, presenting deformity to the eye, dishonouring the Vine, and yielding no fruit by which my fellow-creatures might be benefited, or God glorified.

Grant, O Lord, that in my closet I may remember that I am dependent upon Christ for every supply, that in these sacred moments I may come to his fulness, and obtain grace for every time of need. May the knowledge, that I cannot bear fruit except I abide in Christ, be influential to make me more evangelical in my views and feelings, more anxious that the means of union may be more improved, and more watchful against that which might separate me from Christ. May I be fruitful in every good word and work, a blessing to those around me, an ornament to the gospel, a comfort to the church, and a stranger and pilgrim seeking a better country,— "that is, a heavenly, that God may not be ashamed to call himself my God."

MAY 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, x. 1—18.

"I am the Door." The primary idea of our Lord in using this comparison appears to be, that he is the Door into the sheep-fold.—"No man ever entered into the true church except by faith in him, who is the Door of the sheep." If such an entrance be necessary to private Christians, how much more so to pastors.

But the truth taught us by this metaphor applies to every part of the christian system:—Christ is the Door or means of access to God:—"No man cometh to the Father but by me." There was no entrance into the holy of holies but with the blood of the sacrifice; and it is only as men rely upon and plead the merits of Christ that they can obtain access to Jehovah.—"Through him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access to the Father." The crimes and guilt of men would have formed an impassable barrier in the way of their approach, if Christ had not removed them.

He is also the Medium through which all spiritual life is communicated;—"God sent his Son, that we might live through him." "I am come, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." This is also the idea which our Lord means to give, when he says,—"By me, if any man enter, he shall go in and out and find pasture."

Our justification is by him;—"By him all that believe are justified from all things;" and he is as really our Sanctification too. Christ is holy; and he purifies believers, who are destined to be like him.—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." As being also the Source of life, he is necessarily the Source of sanctification. It is prophesied of him,—"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi."

The final victory of the Christian is "through him that loved him." "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." The fight itself is the "fight of faith," and their victory they wholly ascribe to the Saviour, who, they say, "hath made us kings unto God, and we shall reign with him."

Lastly, Christ is the Door of paradise:—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne." "I give unto them eternal life." "I go to prepare a place for you."

MAY 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, i. 1—25.

The parents of John the Baptist were two pious Jews, among that select few who waited for the Messiah, having some correct ideas of the nature of his kingdom. Zacharias was a priest who officiated in his turn at the temple, and whose work, as such, was to burn incense before the mercy-seat, while the multitude were in the act of prayer in the outer court. What a striking illustration we have here of the christian economy, even in the type! How delightful the idea, that, while thousands of congregations of the faithful are praying in the outer courts below, Jesus is gone into heaven itself, and there offers the incense of his own merits.

The prayers of the multitude in the outer court continued, it seems, during the whole time of the offering of incense. But on this day, when the birth of the Baptist was announced, Zacharias stayed much longer in the inner court than usual, and the people marvelled that he tarried so long. But he had seen an angel, and had been detained to hear tidings of a son, and some distant tidings of the long expected Saviour himself. Not paying that credit to the message from heaven, which he ought to have done, he was struck dumb; and, when he came out, he could not speak to the people, but by his signs they understood that he had seen a vision. After his allotted time of service was over at the temple, Zacharias returned home; and at length John was born, when his father's speech was restored, and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, he burst forth into a Divine rapture, going back to ancient prophecies, to the blessings of the Messiah's reign, and exulting in the prospect of what God was now about to do for his people. In these Divine strains, we find him describing the work of his son, as the forerunner of

Christ; using allusions which show that he expected from the Messiah higher blessings than any of a political nature. Elizabeth, also, on her visit to Mary, the mother of Christ, being filled with the Holy Ghost, was inspired like Zacharias, and congratulated her relative in the most pious and affectionate strains.

Thus the Holy Spirit can fill the minds of believers with holy joy, and with prophetic visions. O my Saviour, I ask not these extraordinary endowments; but I humbly ask for the illuminating, drawing, and purifying influences of thy Spirit,—those influences, without which, I must remain dead in trespasses and sins; but obtaining which, I shall be raised to a spiritual and Divine life.

MAY 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, i. 26—35.

The birth of John the Baptist was announced in the temple, that of Christ in a private house at Nazareth. The terms in which he is announced are much like those found in the ancient prophecies:—“God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Surely this language implies the restoration of the Jews, as well as the universal extension of Christ’s kingdom.

The modesty and humility of Mary are very conspicuous in the whole of her conversation with the angel, and in the praise she afterwards offered up to God for his peculiar mercies: she considers herself as low and obscure, and unworthy such distinguished mercies. The miraculous conception is thus described by Gabriel:—“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow

thee: therefore that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." In this account we find nothing to which every mind may not and ought not to consent; and however mysterious this union of the Divine and human natures may be, the sacred oracles are very plain:—"The Word was God,—the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

On the other hand, the elevating of Mary into an intercessor with Christ, is so great a profanation, and such a sinking of the dignity of the Son of God, that it is astonishing that such notorious corruptions of Christianity should have existed so long, and been diffused, so widely. How a man, retaining the human faculties and professing to derive all his views of the religion of Christ from the Bible, can pray to Mary as the mother of God, is what utterly confounds me, and makes me hold down my head ashamed before the heathen. Still we may suffer our indignation against this extravagance to prevail beyond just limits, by leading us to withhold the respect due to a person so highly favoured of the Lord. She was a blessed woman: all nations justly call her so; but let us remember that even here it was the mercy of the Lord that should be magnified; had it not been for this mercy, Mary had remained a vessel of wrath even as others. It is this mercy which she celebrated on earth:—"He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation." And it is the same mercy which, in the presence of God and the Lamb, as a saved sinner, she still celebrates, and will celebrate for ever. O that I may one day be there; then I shall hear her voice mingling in the song of those redeemed from all iniquity, as well as offering up her own peculiar song of praise for distinguishing goodness.

MAY 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, ii. 4—20.

God has most frequently selected, to receive the communications of his grace, not only the humble in heart, but the humble by natural birth. To a worldly mind it would appear a great waste of heavenly glory, that a whole multitude of the heavenly host should be seen only by a few illiterate shepherds. But, had there been persons more proper to receive these heavenly tidings, we are certain that these shepherds would not have been preferred. Another proof this, that the Almighty intended to send his gospel to the poor; and that what is despised among men may receive peculiar honour from the Lord. To us the presence of an angel would appear most wonderful; and it is said that the shepherds were sore afraid, when the angel of the Lord descended upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. These appearances are not necessary since God has revealed his whole will, and has no new communications to make to the sons of men: if they hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, neither would they be persuaded, if one were dispatched from heaven. From there being so large a number of angels sent on this glorious errand, and from the joy they felt at the birth of the Saviour, we not only perceive the concern of the Almighty to honour the birth of Christ, but we see how interested the angels are in the covenant of redemption. As God is Love; so we may conclude that the angels, who bear his image, are full of the same Divine quality. We may be equally sure, that as men “grow up into Christ in all things,” their dispositions will be brought to resemble this attribute of the Divine nature. As the salvation of a world, the eternal happiness of myriads of immortal spirits, was the object of Christ in coming to seek and to save that which was lost, the angels,

who rejoice when only one sinner is brought to repentance, must have felt the deepest interest in the incarnation and work of the Redeemer. They saw with delight, that the glory of God would hereby be eminently promoted; and that peace, flowing like a river through a distracted world, would be the ultimate effect of the gospel; hence they sang,—“Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men.”

How much is heaven endeared by the consideration, that there we shall join an innumerable company of angels, angels who through the whole dispensation have been ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation!

MAY 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, ii. 21—35.

Notwithstanding the almost total declension of true religion among the Jews at the time of the incarnation, we see, in the characters of Simeon, Anna, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and others, that there was a remnant according to the election of grace, who waited for the consolation of Israel through a suffering Messiah. But none of these pious Jews had clearer ideas of the nature of Christ's kingdom than Simeon, as is manifest by his words when he took Christ in his arms:—“Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Anna's state of mind too is almost equally remarkable:—“she gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.”

Here then we have proofs that where men are waiting for salvation, and looking for redemption,

such is the efficacy of Divine teaching, that they shall not be disappointed. Simeon now welcomed death: he had no other business on earth; he had found the Messiah, and in him the true antidote to the fear of death:—

“Scarce shall I feel death’s cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms.”

How utterly ineffectual to make men happy in death are human merits! These, such as they are, may quiet and stupify the mind; but the love of Christ in the heart enables a man to say,—“I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” Without an ardent attachment to the objects presented to us in the state of happiness, a man may submit to death, but he can never desire it. But, where a person is enabled to rest on the foundation which God has laid in Zion, his hope will be “as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.” And if heaven be “the Canaan that he loves,” he will look with cheerfulness to the enjoyment of the blessedness that awaits him there.

If my threatening sins were gone; if I could realize my interest in the infinitely meritorious atonement of Christ, and in his perfect righteousness, methinks I could adopt the language of Simeon. But these questions,—Have I been made the subject of true repentance? Do I really believe on the Son of God? Or, am I not a mere professor? Do I not come short of possessing the evidences of a real state of grace?—These questions becloud my prospects, and make me afraid of the approach of that moment when I must plunge into eternity.

MAY 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, ii. 40—52.

While we justly consider that our Lord Jesus Christ was born on purpose to save his people from

their sins, and that this was his great business on earth, we must not forget, that he was our Teacher and our Pattern, as well as the Victim for sacrifice. And no example in history can be so deserving the imitation of young people as that supplied from the early part of Christ's life. While he regarded with supreme reverence the commands of his heavenly Father,—“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”—he was subject to his parents, and honoured them. In immediate connexion with this history, and as a proof how amiable a youth he was, it is said, that “as he grew in wisdom and age, he grew in favour both with God and man.” One of his last acts in time was that of committing his mother to the care of his beloved disciple: —“When Jesus” [as he hung upon the cross] “saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy Son. Then said he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother: and from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”

Another thing worthy of imitation in the youthful example of Christ, was, his pursuit of Divine knowledge:—“The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. And when he was twelve years old, his parents found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.” It seems that the young Redeemer excelled as much in modesty as in the other graces; he had wisdom to walk among the wise, but he contented himself with listening to their discourses, and asking questions. Still, there was so much wisdom and depth of thought in what dropt from him, that it is added,—“All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”

What an inimitable pattern from infancy to death! How amiable is every thing in the character of Christ! Yet what sanctity, what spotless purity! Attractive, and yet full of the majesty of truth and holiness. Benevolent, compassionate, and yet sur-

rounding himself with all the attributes of a Divine, inflexible Legislator! Finally, he maintains the honours of the Divine Government as the end of the law for righteousness, and yet dies for the deliverance of those who had broken it, and fallen under its curse.

MAY 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, iv. 1—11.

Satan had attempted to cut off our Lord Jesus Christ as soon as born; but failing in this malignant effort, we hear no more of his assaults on Christ during his youth. As there was found no sin in him, upon which to fix a temptation; and as he had not then begun the work his Father had given him to do, Satan felt no immediate alarm respecting the overthrow of his own usurped power. But as soon as the Redeemer began to enter on his work of redeeming men, Satan made a determined assault; and this being foreseen, Christ is led by the blessed Spirit into the wilderness, that, by fasting and prayer, he might be better able to encounter the adversary.

It would seem, that the temptation had continued forty days and nights before the particular acts of temptation mentioned by the Evangelist began. What our Lord endured during so long a time, we know not. To add to his distress, he was alone in a savage desert, surrounded with wild beasts. The only comforts he had, came from above:—"angels ministered unto him." But who shall tell the horrors which filled his mind, and his distress of soul, during these days of infernal power and malice? The apostle appears to allude to the extremities to which Christ was at this time driven, in these words;—"It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to

make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

The grand point at which the tempter aimed, was, to prevail upon Christ to own his power: to this he tempted him, first, under the hope that he should be relieved from hunger, after fasting forty days. He next placed him in a state of danger, and urged him to an act of presumption. Lastly, he attempted to excite ambition in his breast,—but the fiend was vanquished. The sure weapon which the Saviour used under these assaults, was, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

Thus we have not a High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities:—

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

MAY 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xvii.
1—13.

It is highly probable, that the primary design of this manifestation of the glory of the Redeemer, was, to give a new evidence to the apostles of the divine mission of Christ, and through them to the world. It was a most solemn and extraordinary transaction, bringing earth and heaven much nearer to us than any other miraculous appearance recorded in the sacred writings; for we have not only the voice from heaven heard at the baptism of Christ, but the descent of Moses and Elias, in a bodily shape, who were seen conversing with Jesus; the subject was,—“his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” No doubt, during the whole time of our Lord’s tabernacling in the flesh, this was the interesting theme which filled the thoughts of the whole heavenly world. Perhaps these persons

were sent to strengthen the Saviour in the prospect of his sufferings; and who so proper to come on such an errand as Moses and Elias? Nor is it impossible, but that the glory which was thus put upon Christ, when his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, was designed, in addition to the voice from his heavenly Father, to hold up to him as man the glories which awaited him after finishing his work.

The effect upon the apostles was, as might be expected, overpowering; but, when recovered from the first alarm, they wished for the continuance of this heavenly vision;—"Lord, it is good for us to be here." They thought nothing of their own accommodation, though they were upon an exceedingly high mountain: it was sufficient, they thought, if they could secure the presence of their Lord, and of his heavenly guests. It is said by the Apostle Luke, that Christ and these apostles had gone up to the mountain to pray, and that while there, he was thus transfigured. We frequently read of Christ's going up alone, to the tops of mountains, to pray, and that in one instance he continued all night in prayer to God.

If to see our Lord Jesus Christ thus partially glorified, and that only for a very short time, was so delightful, what will it be to see him in all his glory, and to be like him, and to be with him for ever!

MAY 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, xxi.
1—16.

This would have been the way, with the addition of spiritual joy, in which Christ would have been received in every country and town he visited, if men had been duly sensible of his worth, and awake to

their own spiritual condition. It arises out of a sullen adherence to the common rebellion, that Christ is not welcomed by every heart. Every object of sense, however mean and insipid, is welcome. Any thing but Christ:—"Not this man, but Barabbas."

O my soul, how deep is thy guilt, that Christ has been so slighted and neglected by thee! He is fairer than the children of men; and if his face be marred more than any man's, it is because "he has borne thy sorrows, and carried thy griefs." If he appear with less distinction in the world than thou desirest, remember, "he was rich, but for thy sake he became poor, that thou through his poverty, mightest become rich." Thou art displeased to find him the friend of publicans and sinners; but recollect, he is Lord of angels, and all honour, and power, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, are his by a Divine right; and if he be found among the poor and the despised, he is there as the good Physician, applying the healing balm, and placing even these among the sons and heirs of God. Thou objectest to the degrading nature of his death; but, "he was wounded for thy transgressions, he was bruised for thy iniquities;" he bore the curse from thee, and endured it on the cross, and it is by these very stripes that thou art healed. Thou complainest of the severity of his prohibitions; yet he forbids thee nothing but that which has poisoned and destroyed thy happiness and that of millions,—of the rigour of his injunctions, but accustom thyself to his precepts, and thou shalt find his "yoke easy, and his burden light." Thou complainest that he imposes upon thee a perpetual state of warfare with all its deprivations; but thou shouldest remember, that it is "the good fight," preparatory to a victory the most complete and illustrious, and leading to the possession of a "kingdom which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away."

Why, then, do I not love my Saviour? Lord! my guilt is inexcusable, but I put my face in the dust; abhor and detest myself. My only refuge is thy grace;

my only remedy the transforming influences of thy Holy Spirit. Still, I should have rejoiced in joining the multitude in spreading my garments and the green branches in the way, and in crying with them,—“Hosannah to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest.” Surely I shall be permitted at last to join in elevating the strain,—Unto Him,—unto Him,—“unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, unto Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

But where does the Lord Jesus go, after this reception of him, as the king of Israel, the Son of David? Does he take possession of a splendid palace, assume the offices of state, and surround himself with guards and courtiers, and all the emblems of royalty? He enters the temple, and casts out those who had defiled it, heals the blind and the lame, and receives the hosannahs of children. O Lord, do thou enter my heart, and purify it, so that it may become “the habitation of God through the Spirit.”

MAY 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xv. 15—38.

“Father, the hour is come,” the dreadful hour so long foreseen; not “*the* hour” merely because I shall be betrayed, insulted, spit upon, lacerated, and put to death; all this I shall calmly endure; these are the impotent though malicious excesses of worms only. As it respects my life,—“no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” But the hour in which I must endure thy frown,—that hour is come: the hour of *thy* wrath and vengeance. There can be little doubt, but that it was this which lay so heavy on our Lord’s mind, when he said,—“Father,

the hour is come." This was the cup which he prayed might pass from him, and this frown was that which produced the doleful cry on Calvary,—
 "My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?"
 The terms sacrifice, propitiation, atonement, all refer to the same doctrine : a sin-avenging God exalting the honours of his justice in the sufferings and death of Christ, the Victim pouring out his soul unto death.

"Glorify thy Son;" strengthen thy Son, that he may be enabled to accomplish this great work ; that he may bear the sins of men in his own body on the tree ; that he may offer himself as a voluntary and willing Substitute ; and that he may finally enter on those glories which are allotted to him at thy right hand.

"That thy Son also may glorify thee ;" that in his death there may be such a display of thy justice and the infinite purity of thy government, as may deeply impress all worlds, and cause thee to be glorified wherever there are minds capable of the impression ; that in his resurrection by thine own arm, he may be manifestly the Saviour of the world ; and that by his thus making the law honourable, and thy government glorious, the way of mercy may be opened to all nations, and thy name glorified in the most illustrious displays of this mercy over the greatest instances of human depravity :—"That, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But not only are the Divine justice and mercy glorified in the death of Christ, but, "here the whole Deity is known;" it is the centre from which all the beams of Divine truth burst forth ; it is the essence of all sacred truth, the energy of all, the cement of all, and the glory of all.

MAY 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xiv. 12—26.

The edification and comfort which the pious have received from this ordinance in all ages of the New Testament church, prove the wisdom of the Founder of the feast. The rich entertain their friends at the expense of the life of other victims; but Christ gives us his own flesh to eat. The same night in which he was betrayed, the Redeemer took bread, blessed it, and then brake it, and gave it to his apostles, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." While he sat among these favoured friends, in the most tender manner offering them food, and calling that food his bruised broken body and his precious blood, surely every eye was upon him, and each one was ready to ask the meaning of these strange expressions.

In this ordinance, what a lively view we have of the purport of our Lord's death, and of the benefits flowing from it! Who can look upon these emblems, without being filled with the most profound awe at the sight of that spotless purity, that inflexible justice, which required the blood, the death, of so exalted a Victim,—without receiving an overwhelming impression of the inconceivable turpitude of sin,—without trembling at that wrath which would have destroyed the victims delivered by this sacrifice! The Jews had been used hitherto to commemorate the deliverance of their forefathers from the destroying angel, and from the house of bondage; but henceforward they were to celebrate a deliverance from everlasting destruction.

How well calculated is this ordinance to awaken our godly sorrow, by calling upon us to look upon Him whom we have pierced;—to strengthen our faith, while we thus behold "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;"—to inflame our

zeal and attachment, while the price of our pardon and our bliss is brought so distinctly to our view ;—to promote christian love, while, as one family, we partake of the same bread and the same cup,—and to hold up to mankind the grand remedy for the miseries of a bleeding condemned world !

Many plead for the carnal or bodily presence of Christ in this supper, and attach remission of sins to the reception of the body of Christ ; with others, a ceremony is substituted for a living faith and a holy life. The Corinthians could have had no idea of what is called the corporeal presence ; for they treated the elements as common food, and this is an error into which we may all be in danger of falling. It is true, the elements were not changed, but the memorials of Christ's body and blood are to be received with a becoming reverence, and the vows we make at the Lord's table should be realized with the deepest solemnity, as well as with the utmost sincerity.

MAY 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xiv. 26—42.

On the Thursday evening, that is, the day before his death, our Lord Jesus, with his disciples, entered a grove, or garden, called Gethsemane ; soon after he had entered this grove, he took aside the three disciples who had been present at the transfiguration, Peter, and James, and John, and going into, it is probable, a more private part of the grove, he fell down with his face to the ground, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. A little afterwards, he said to these three disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : stay, and watch with me." Distress and horror of a peculiar nature must have seized on the Redeemer at this moment, and this made him seek the presence of these his friends.

What it is that thus brings the sorrows of death and the pains of hell upon him, we afterwards learn; it is the cup of his Father's wrath. In a state of perplexity and agitation, even to the last extremity, he moves a little further, falls on his face, and prays,—“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;” and then he returns to his disciples, who, little thinking of the sorrows of their Lord, had fallen asleep. After gently reproving them, he goes away a second time, and again calls out in an agony,—“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.” He again returns to his disciples, to these three, perhaps, whom he had set to watch, and finds them asleep. After a gentle and kind admonition, too mild, we should be ready to think, for the occasion, he returns again to his solitude, and prays the third time, saying the same words. The apostle Luke adds something to this account, saying,—“And there appeared an angel to him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Immediately after Christ had prayed the third time, he came to his disciples; and, as though now strengthened to bear the load of all our guilt, he says, “Behold, the hour is at hand. Rise, let us be going. Behold, he is at hand, that doth betray me.”

See here an example of the worth of prayer. Our Lord prays once, twice, thrice, using nearly the same petitions; and, says the apostle, “when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, he was heard in that he feared.” It was while in Gethsemane, and on the cross, that this illustrious Sufferer appears to have endured the greatest extremity of sorrow. But what did he suffer when thus “pouring out his soul unto death,” when “the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,” and when the fire

from heaven thus fell upon the burnt-offering,—
eternity must disclose.

MAY 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xviii. 1—18.

This is the man who has been called and selected by the Saviour of the world to attend and assist him in his ministry. He has had opportunities of hearing all his discourses, of witnessing all his miracles of mercy, and of being present at all those interesting scenes so common in the life of our Saviour, and in the mere perusal of which the soul is melted into tenderness and admiration. Yet this man betrayed his Lord; and this after a solemn warning, delivered during the last supper, and after the dreadful denunciation,—“It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” To add to the perfidy, he deliberates day after day; seeks his opportunity; and, at length, betrays him with a kiss and a friendly salutation, acknowledging Christ to be his Lord,—“Hail, Master!”

What overwhelming excitement can it be, that thus overpowers all the principles of integrity, of tenderness, and of religion; that thus breaks asunder all the bands of friendship, and casts into oblivion so many miracles, so many discourses, so many proofs of tenderness, and so many manifestations of divine approval?—He receives as his reward only the amount of a fine paid for accidentally killing a slave, or about £3 15s.

We are astonished at a character so thoroughly base, so detestably perfidious and covetous; and little think how near akin we are to Judas. Thou acknowledgest, O Christian, that sin is detestable; yet canst thou find no instance in which, notwithstanding all that thou hast heard and known of Christ, thou hast betrayed the Redeemer? Ah! such is the desperate wickedness of the heart, that there is no sin

too aggravated to be committed by man, if left of God:—Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" And Elisha answered,—“The Lord hath shewed me, that thou shalt be king over Syria.”

What need then of Divine grace, of incessant humility and caution, and of constantly cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart. O Lord Jesus, our only safety lies in thine intercessions and thy ever-present grace.

The end of Judas, like the end of many apostates, was most miserable. Unable to support the horrors of his own mind, he, casting away the price of his perfidy with detestation, goes and hangs himself. No horrors like those attending apostasy after enjoying great privileges:—“Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

MAY 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xviii. 15—40.

Several circumstances aggravated exceedingly the sin of Peter: he had said,—“Thou art Christ, the Son of the Highest.”—“To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life?”—“Though all forsake thee, yet will not I; yea, though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee!”—How ready some people would have been to say, “This man has really a good heart.” Yet this same Peter, notwithstanding all this, and though he had seen all the miracles of Christ, and the transfiguration, denies him, and denies him with oaths and curses! This is human nature,—a complication of weakness and treachery! Well are we enjoined to “refrain from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” Still, there is a wide difference between the sin of Peter and that of Judas: Peter sinned in a place full of enemies, and in a moment of surprise. Judas

went to the high-priest, to betray his Lord, and watched deliberately for an opportunity to deliver him up to his murderers.

One look from the Saviour, a look full of tenderness, no doubt, broke the heart of Peter. Upon the spot where he had sinned, upon that very spot, torrents of repenting tears flowed:—"He went out, and wept bitterly." It is said, he remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, and "when he thought thereon, he wept." When he remembered all that Christ had said to him, all that he had done for him, all his own vows and obligations, and especially our Lord's last friendly warning to him, he gave a loose to his grief. Whither Peter went, we know not: he does not appear to have been at the crucifixion, but, as soon as he hears that Christ is risen from the dead, he hastens to the grave. The Redeemer, before hand with Peter, had already sent a message by Mary-Magdalene and two other women, that he was risen from the dead. How soon he forgets Peter's unkindness!

Is there no lesson for thee here, O Christian? Is there no part of thy conduct, which seems to say,—*"I know him not?"* Hast thou never, from fear or shame, foregone the loudest calls to own Christ before men? Peter's transgression has been but often repeated through thy pride and cowardice. Thou hast often gloried in thy shame, but seldom in Christ the crucified; and were not he the God of grace, he would disown thee in the day when he will make a marked and eternal distinction between his friends and his enemies.

MAY 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xxiii. 1—26.

It is said of Charles the First, that when he appeared before those who sat in judgment on him, he refused to plead, disowning their power to try him who was their

king. With how much more propriety might the Redeemer have urged a similar objection to these worms!

After our Lord had partaken, with his disciples, of the passover, he instituted the Lord's supper; and at the close of the supper, it is supposed, that he offered up the remarkable prayer recorded in the 17th of John. He then went into the garden of Gethsemane; and after his prayer and sufferings there, Judas, at the head of a band of officers, betrayed his Lord. He is first led away to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high-priest, and thence to the palace of the latter, where the sanhedrim are assembled. It was in this place, while the court was seeking false witnesses and matter of accusation against him, that Peter, who had followed afar off, and had crept into the hall among the servants, denied Christ; and in the midst of these transactions, Judas returned the thirty pieces of silver. After midnight, the chief priests, elders, and scribes, forming the sanhedrim, or grand council of the nation, ordered the Lord Jesus Christ to be brought before them; they pronounced him guilty of the crime of blasphemy: and about two in the morning, this assembly rose up, and led him to the town-hall, when Pilate came out to them, to know the accusation against the prisoner: for these murderers were afraid of being defiled by going into the judgment-hall! The chief priests charge him with setting up a claim against Cæsar; as a political leader, raising seditions throughout Judea and all Galilee. Hearing of Galilee, Pilate sends him to Herod, where he is insulted by every degree of contumely, and then brought back to Pilate, who makes various efforts to release him, but in vain. Barabbas, a robber and murderer, is preferred to the blessed Jesus, respecting whom they cry out,—“Crucify him! Crucify him! Let him be crucified!” Then Pilate scourged the Redeemer; and the soldiers, having platted a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and threw around him a purple robe; and falling on their knees before him,

they mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!—After this, Pilate's wife forbids him to touch the life of this righteous man; and Pilate therefore brought him out and proclaimed his innocence: thus Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe: and Pilate saith to them, Behold, the man! But they again call for his crucifixion. He makes further efforts, but they urge the charge of blasphemy, for which, they said, he ought to die; and after this they intimidate the governor, by holding up to him, that if he let this man go, he was no friend to Cæsar. At length, wearied out by their clamours for the blood of their victim, about eight on Friday morning, that is, about the time of preparing the morning thank-offerings at the passover, Pilate took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am clear from the blood of this innocent person, see ye to it. Upon which the whole multitude, answering, said, His blood be upon us, and upon our children.

What a sight is here! The Creator and Judge of all, standing to be vilified, insulted, condemned, and executed, as a criminal, by the worms whom he had created! What patience, what love, that could make him willing to undergo all this for objects so unworthy! O Lord, to what have my sins brought thee! May I never more grieve thee, never be afraid of going before my fellow-worms, to testify thy love; nor of suffering for thy sake.

MAY 26.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xix. 16—42.

After Pilate had delivered the Saviour to be crucified, a little before nine on the Friday morning, the time when the morning sacrifice was laid on the altar, the soldiers stripped him of the purple robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him to a place in the

suburbs called Golgotha, or Calvary, perhaps a cemetery, the place of execution. It was the custom that the criminal to be executed should carry the instrument of death. Jesus began to bear his cross; but, sinking under it, they seized a stranger, and compelled him by force to help the sufferer. The crowd was, no doubt, great, as Jesus of Nazareth and two others also were to suffer; and the Evangelist Luke says, that "a great company followed Jesus, and many women also, who bewailed and lamented him." But Jesus forbade their sorrow, or endeavoured to direct it towards other objects, his persecutors, and the Jewish nation in general.

At length, they arrive at Calvary: they write on the cross of Christ his imputed crime, in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew. They nail him by the hands and feet to the tree, and then fasten the tree in the ground upright.* While they were nailing him to the cross, Christ prayed for the murderers;—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—The soldiers divide his clothes among them. The crowd, the soldiers, the priests, and the scribes, insult and deride him, shaking their heads, and daring him to exert his power for his own deliverance from death:—"He saved others; himself he cannot save." Even the thieves join the unfeeling rabble. The soldiers insultingly offer him vinegar and gall, as though to assuage his thirst. The two thieves escape all these insults: Why!—At length one of these culprits begins to pray to Jesus, and, as a signal triumph over the powers of darkness, whose kingdom he was then shaking to its centre, the Saviour purifies and takes him with him to paradise.—Jesus now commits his mother to the care of John, who seems to have been the only apostle present: the others

* About nine o'clock in the morning, the Redeemer was nailed to the cross.—His sufferings appear to have been most overwhelming about mid-day; and he died probably soon after three in the afternoon.

whose names are mentioned were women. Respecting the friends of Christ at this time, this general notice is taken:—"And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off beholding these things." From mid-day till three in the afternoon, a universal darkness prevailed; and at this last hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying,—"*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" A little after, Jesus again cried,—"*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;*" and having said this, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. And behold, the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, to show that the death of Christ had opened a free and full access to the mercy-seat; the earth did quake; the rocks rent; the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose. When the centurion and others saw the earthquake and the other wonders, they feared greatly, and said, Truly, this was the Son of God. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. Before they took the body from the cross, they would have broken the legs; but finding Jesus already dead, they desisted. A soldier, as an act of wantonness, pierced his side with a spear, and forthwith there came out blood and water.

O may I look by faith on him whom I have pierced, and mourn with a godly sorrow; rejoicing in the blessed truth held up to us by the poet:—

"If God's own Son thus bleeds and dies,
The sinner sure may live."

"Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon
Through means that speak its value infinite!
A pardon bought with blood! with blood Divine!
With blood Divine of him I made my foe!
Persisted to provoke! though woo'd, and aw'd,
Bless'd, and chastis'd, a flagrant rebel still!
A rebel 'midst the thunders of his throne!
Nor I alone! a rebel universe!
My species up in arms! not one exempt!
Yet for the foulest of the foul, he dies."

MAY 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, xv. 42—47.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died soon after three o'clock on Friday afternoon. After they had ascertained that he was dead, at the approach of evening, Joseph of Arimathea begged the body of Christ from Pilate. It is said of this Joseph, that he belonged to the Jewish council, but had not consented to Christ's condemnation; that he was a good and just man, who waited for the kingdom of God. He took down the body of Christ from the cross, and wrapped it in a piece of linen, inclosing about a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Having thus wrapped up the body, they carried it to a grove or garden adjoining Calvary, which contained a new sepulchre, or an excavation in a rock belonging to Joseph, wherein was never man yet laid: there they laid the body of Jesus, and rolled a great stone against the mouth of the cave. The women also which came with him from Galilee, or whose houses were in Galilee, and who had been present at the execution, followed the corpse, and beheld the sepulchre, and marked how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared more spices, resting on the sabbath.

The next day, after sun-set, their sabbath being passed, the priests and pharisees came to Pilate, and entreated him that a watch might be set over the grave of Christ, for they had heard that he had promised to rise again on the third day. A guard was therefore set over the grave, and the stone was sealed.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ submitted to death, and was laid in the grave, lying there as the victim of Divine Justice, and perfuming the grave by the presence of his blessed body! But, as he fell to conquer, so he went down into the grave, that he

might be the first fruits of them that slept; and thus he fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea;—"O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." For it is said, that many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves at his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

MAY 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xx. 1—18.

Of the exact time of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus we are not informed; it was, probably, very soon after midnight. We are equally uninformed of the circumstances attending it, and know not whether any of the angels were present when he arose. We are informed, that soon after midnight, before the first day of the week began to dawn, the two Marys, who had so faithfully followed the Saviour, came to the sepulchre, bringing spices. On the way, they were anxious how they should get into the cave to anoint the body, on account of the great stone laid at its mouth; but, before their arrival, an angel had descended, and had rolled away the stone from the cave, and then sat upon it: his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow. Before him the watch trembled, and became as dead men. The women also were amazed at the sight of the angel; but he pacified them by saying,—“Fear not: for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here: he is risen, according to his own word: come, see the place where the Lord lay. But go and tell his disciples, and direct them to go and meet him in Galilee.” The women fled with fear, mixed with joy, and told Peter and John; who went and found it even so: the linen clothes and the napkin they found in separate places, but him they find not: they therefore returned home. But Mary stood before the

sepulchre weeping, and, looking in, she saw two angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They entered into conversation, asking her why she wept? She said, They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. Then turning round, she saw a person, in appearance, the gardener, who asked her, Woman, why weepest thou? She said, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus said to her, *Mary!* She, hearing his well-known voice, turned, and exclaimed, *Master!*—and hastened to clasp his feet, But he said, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended. But go to my brethren, and say,—“I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” The Evangelist Matthew says, that on the same day Jesus met the women going to tell the disciples, and that they, on being accosted by him, held him by the feet, and worshipped him. He appeared again the same evening to the disciples, who were assembled with closed doors, for fear of the Jews, and gave them the salutation of peace, breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

How cheering are these accounts! How condescending the Saviour! And yet how simply are these astonishing events related! The resurrection, which thus defeated all the malice of the powers of darkness, excited no small stir among the priests and pharisees: a council was called, and the soldiers were bribed to say that they fell asleep in the night, when the body was stolen by the disciples.

This event should be celebrated by the congregations of the saints, as the Grand Christian Jubilee, the consummation on earth of the glorious work of redemption: —“O grave, where is thy victory?”

MAY 29.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xxi.
13—17.

On the day of the resurrection, two of the disciples went to a neighbouring village, and on their way were conversing on the extraordinary events which had lately taken place at Jerusalem, when a stranger overtakes them, and asks them the subject upon which they seem so anxiously conversing. You appear to be a stranger in Jerusalem, but have you not heard, say they, what has happened there lately? The stranger asks, What things? They then relate the recent events respecting Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had hoped to hail as the long-expected Messiah. It was true, they had that day heard strange things: some persons declared that they had seen a vision of angels, who announced that this Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead. The stranger then takes up the subject, and, blaming them for their unbelief, shows them that all this was an exact fulfilment of the prophecies. While thus conversing, they arrive at the house where they were to stay, and the stranger offers to go forward, but they detain him, as the day was closing. And now the Saviour takes bread, and blesses it, and gives it to them, which recalls to their remembrance so strongly the last supper, that they instantly recognise him as their dear Lord; when he immediately becomes invisible.

Eight days after the resurrection, Jesus again appeared to the disciples, when Thomas was present, and gave the evidence he demanded; at the same time assuring him, that, hereafter, *they* rather should be blessed, who, having no opportunity of seeing, should believe. Thomas, overcome with astonishment and self-abasement, brake out in the most impassioned manner, and owned the risen Saviour as his Lord, and his God.

After this, on a certain day, several of the disciples accompanied Peter as he went a fishing, and continued out all night without success; but, by the advice of a stranger, they cast the net into the sea once more; and now they caught such a quantity of fish, that they could not draw the net along: which led to the discovery, that this stranger was the Lord. After dinner, Jesus put those interrogatories to Simon Peter, which brought forth from him that pathetic appeal;—"Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee."

How much greater reason have I to question my love to Christ than Peter had! He, in a moment of fear, denied him, and then returned to the most ardent and persevering attachment. But my love has been always cold; my attachment has been always questionable; and my backslidings and practical renunciations of his authority have been most awful and most frequent. O look upon me, blessed Saviour, as thou didst upon Peter, and melt my heart, and enable me to say,—“Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee.”

MAY 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xxiv.
50—53.

Our Lord, during forty days after his resurrection, had repeated interviews with his disciples, and established their faith in his resurrection; he then led them out as far as Bethany, and said,—“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The Evangelist Luke, in the first of the Acts, says,—“When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.” In his gospel he describes these last scenes of our Lord’s history on earth thus:—After taking them as far as Bethany, (to the top of a mountain, according to the Evangelist Matthew,) “he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, that while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.” In the Acts, the Evangelist Luke adds,—“While they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven.” Mark says,—“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” “The disciples then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”

Such is the account given by the different Evangelists, of this most important event, an event in which the Almighty confirms the whole of our Lord’s mission, and in which the Saviour “leads captivity captive, and receives gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them;” after which the Holy Ghost descended to establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. We have no account how our Lord was received into heaven. We are told, that he sat down at the right hand of God, and that,—“Jehovah said unto him, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” The honours done to Christ, on his arrival, are thus foretold in the twenty-fourth Psalm;—“Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory?—The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of

Hosts, he is the King of Glory." We may imagine, that the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, of those around the throne, sang that new song, saying,—“Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

O Lord, grant, that at some future day, I may, through the efficacy of thy atonement, be admitted to swell the chorus,—

“And blessings more than we can give,
Be, Lord, for ever thine.”

MAY 31.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, viii. 34.

Our Lord's entrance into heaven had been typified by the entrance of the high-priest into the holy of holies once a year with the blood of the sacrifice then offered. To this the apostle alludes, when he says,—“Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Aaron went in with the blood of others; but Christ, being the typified Sacrifice itself, himself appears in the presence of God for us.—“This Man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God.” There he intercedes for the pardon of humbled sinners; and through these intercessions he is “able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

What encouragement is this for a returning sinner, that his success depends on the meritorious sacrifice and most prevalent intercessions of the Son of God; and that these procure the pardon of sins the most

numerous and aggravated. When the Redeemer stood by the grave of Lazarus, he thus addressed his heavenly Father;—"I know that thou hearest me always." His prayers want none of those things which are required to make ours acceptable; they are prevalent by merits ever fragrant before God. We are, in consequence, invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, having access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and having a high priest over the house of God.

But the Saviour, in his character of the Lord our Righteousness, or Jesus Christ the Righteous, is an Advocate with the Father. If any man sin, and have backslidden from his profession, Christ appears before God, to plead his perfect righteousness, in which such a fallen Christian is justified from all things.

The intercession of Christ is a powerful encouragement to the tempted:—"Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Our preservation from spiritual enemies is also ascribed to the prayers of the Lord Jesus:—"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Lastly, the consolation and sanctification of believers are ascribed to the ascension and consequent intercessions of the Saviour;—"It is expedient for you, that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but, if I depart, I will send him unto you."

Commit thy cause, O my soul, into the hands of him who appeareth in the presence of God for thee. Ten thousand thousand thanks to thee, O blessed Intercessor, for the encouragement we derive to draw near to God on account of thy intercessions, and for all the blessings thou scatterest on thy church in thy glorious state of exaltation.—"He gave some, apostles; (the highest order of ministers;) and some,

prophets; (persons speaking by immediate impressions from the Holy Spirit;) and some, evangelists; (assistants to the missionaries;) and some, pastors; (of particular flocks;) and teachers;" helpers to the pastors.

JUNE 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xii. 12—32.

In our meditations hitherto we have traced the progress of the true religion from the dawn of Divine Revelation to the return of the Messiah to heaven; and we are now led to make this inquiry,—In a dispensation, all the events of which are, manifestly, in the estimation of the Deity, of inconceivable importance, and connected with the progress of which through time we observe the ministration of angels, the constant descent of the Holy Spirit, and the incarnation, the death, the resurrection, and ascension of "the Lord from heaven,"—What does the Divine design comprehend? Is it to be confined to the accomplishment of some small discomfiture of the powers of darkness, or does it intend their complete subjugation?—Does it contemplate the recovery of such a remnant of fallen men as we have hitherto seen in the christian church, or, during numerous ages, will it infallibly accomplish the salvation of a world?

If it were possible for a doubt to remain on this subject, the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to his apostles would be sufficient to remove it. By this his last command he directed, that the gospel should be preached throughout the world, not once merely, and then to be confined to the places where christian churches continued to exist; but that the church should consider it to be the duty of every age, of every year, and of every day, to the end of time,