

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

NOVEMBER 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xlviii.

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

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

person can say,—His infinite wisdom is mine, to guide my feet in the way of peace; his power is mine, to protect me from all my enemies; his grace, to pardon all my sins; and his faithfulness, to guide me even unto death: he is my infallible, my almighty, and consoling Guide. He is mine for ever and ever; he will never leave me, nor forsake me. He will be mine in a state wherein I shall be able to realize the treasure I have in him; wherein I shall be able to behold his glory, and he will unfold his grandeur and matchless perfections to my view. With what exquisite pleasure have I beheld something of his glory in the emanations of his power and wisdom in this lower world,—in the rising and setting sun, the starry heavens, the fathomless and measureless ocean, the revolving seasons, and the thousand wonders shining as well in his minutest works as in the mountains which touch the clouds! But, in that place which he has chosen for his own abode, where he will collect all the lovers of the Redeemer into one perfect and happy community, how much more clearly will his wonders be displayed, and with what admiration, gratitude, and affection, shall I then see God, my own God, in every thing clearly, especially in the blessed Redeemer! Did Philip see the Father when he saw Christ in his humiliation? How much more shall I see of his glory in the face of my glorified Saviour!

How wonderful that God should call a worm to such honours, and raise to such a dignity those who dwell in dust! Grant, O Lord, that with such hopes I may walk worthily of this high calling, and dwell on earth as one who is an heir of God.

NOVEMBER 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, iii.

After human beings had obliterated the Divine law from their minds, a *written* communication from God

was, surely, a peculiar favour; since it passed from the individuals who first received it, into the hands of a countless multitude. Yet even with *such* a communication, what a clashing of opinions do we witness on the most important subjects! How much greater would the disagreement have been, had God made a merely oral communication! That there are mysteries in this book, is a circumstance not to be wondered at, when visible and palpable objects are acknowledged to be full of mystery. Is it not a proof of the efficacy of Divine revelation, that on that most mysterious subject,—the nature of the Deity, its lessons are so plain, that for all the purposes of faith and morals, it teaches effectually even the most illiterate?

In the words selected for this day's meditation, the apostle says, We speak, or show you, the wisdom of God displayed in the mystery of the incarnation. What a mystery we have in the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ; that in Christ should dwell the fulness of the Godhead bodily! And yet in this deeply profound subject, how much of the Divine wisdom is displayed! For by this union Christ became a perfect Saviour, capable of bearing the load of human guilt, and imparting an infinite degree of merit to his sufferings. In this mysterious provision, God, the holy God, has secured his own dignity in the government of his accountable creatures, while he pardons the offences of the trembling penitent. But in this marvellous plan, provision has also been made for the Divine Being to dwell with man, so that the human soul becomes the habitation of God through the Spirit: and, finally, in the development of this mystery we see how the wisdom of God has not only frustrated the design of the enemy of God and man, but made his attempt the means of such a display of the Divine character as shall be influential upon all intelligent creatures in all worlds, and to all eternity.

NOVEMBER 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, lvii.

The conduct of the wicked is here and in other places described as “a way.” Christ calls it “a broad way;” and it contains many bye-paths; however diversified the ways of sinners may be, they are always grievous. Some are walking in the way which John Bunyan calls that of “worldly-wiseman:” these are a keen, plodding, careful, persevering race, whose eagle eye is always fixed on what they call “the main chance,” and they obtain credit for deep sagacity, regardless of the warning of Christ; — “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” Others employ life wholly in more refined speculations: these despise the man who is the drudge of the world. Great numbers are thoroughly licentious, and live merely for the gratification of brutal appetite. Others go about to establish their own righteousness, but do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God: they consider themselves righteous, and despise others.

What a scene is this for the pure and holy God to witness! We might expect, that, as the pure and righteous Governor of the world, he would let forth his wrath, bring on immediately the general doom, and cause the world and all that is therein to be burnt up. But, O wonderful grace! He says, — “I have seen the ways of man, and I will heal him.” He does not wait the return of the sinner: he might wait for ever in vain. He sees that sin, like a mortal disease, threatens his destruction, and that, to save him, he must snatch him from the pit. Therefore, in a moment, when the sinner little expected such a visitation, and when he had nearly exhausted all the means of self-destruction, the Divine Being interposes, and calls to the sinner, — “Why wilt thou die? It is hard for thee to kick against the goads.” He fills his mind

with a salutary anxiety about his state, draws him to the throne of grace, and thus brings him to the great Physician, who heals all his diseases, sets his feet in the way of peace, and establishes his goings. Being then placed under the teachings and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, he treads the narrow path, and this leads him to life everlasting.

If not thus healed, our disease must end fatally. Over how many thousand victims can sin and death boast! No alms, no good works of any kind, no penances, no acts of splendid charity, can atone for one sin, or heal a broken heart, a wounded conscience. Nor need we wish for any other expedient:—"His hands infected nature cure." The good Physician casts out none who come to him.

Let us adore God, if we have been healed: let us remember also that there are many dying of this disease among our friends, servants, and neighbours. Although we cannot heal them, we can endeavour to bring them to the means of cure.

NOVEMBER 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—Jude.

Man is surrounded here with nothing but the uncertainty of health, property, friends, and whatever else makes up the aggregate of human happiness: they all make unto themselves wings, and fly away. There is one thing in our lot which is absolutely inevitable,—death. This is always certain, and always near: and this is the most dreadful calamity which can befall us. Wise men in every age have braved death in the path of duty, and many have passed through the dark valley with more than human fortitude; yet none but fools ever despised it. It is too serious a matter to be treated with levity. Death puts an end to all present enjoyments; it closes all our plans,

however much of our time or attention they may have occupied: and it breaks up all our connexions: the places, the beloved friends, the delighted circle, which once knew us, shall know us no more for ever. But that which makes death a still greater calamity, is, that it puts a period to all further hope from futurity: then, he that is filthy, must be filthy still, and he that is righteous, will remain so for ever.

After this, the judgment! If men did but consider this! If the votaries of pleasure could but realize this awful scene, after they have been taking their fill at the unhallowed fountain,—“After this, the judgment!”

“Enjoy the day of mirth, but know,
There is a day of judgment too.”

In some awful moment, yet hidden in the eternal counsels, the Saviour will leave heaven, with all his holy angels,—an immense and glorious retinue: and will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. What a Friend will Christ be then! How valuable then the blessed gospel! What confusion will then cover the face of the unbeliever! And has the christian salvation proved true at last? And do I now realize all these descriptions which I once gave? And does the Judge descend? Have I then played the fool, and by neglecting a timely preparation lost myself for ever?

NOVEMBER 5.

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

It is certainly a very commendable thing to endeavour to improve the civil condition of mankind: to diffuse the blessings of elementary knowledge, to erect and endow public seminaries, to extend the arts and sciences,—all this is highly laudable. But how

much more ought we to feel for the moral and spiritual state of men, who are declared in scripture, the word of truth and verity, to be "under sin," so under it, that sin has the dominion over them: under the guilt of innumerable offences, and exposed to the fearful consequences which will follow transgression! Dreadful thought! God has declared this to be the condition of the whole human race: all, old and young, the savage and the sage, all are under sin, and under every thing which sin can bring upon them. Therefore all are condemned, and, unless pardoned through their acceptance of the interposition of a Mediator, all await the respective periods of their execution.

What shall we do? One says, I will reform; another, I will devote my property to the church; another, I will renounce the world, and spend my remaining days in abstinence and prayer. There is a promise thrown out, as a rope from a ship to save the sinking mariner: if thou canst lay hold of that, reader, all will be well; but these are all human devices,—

"There's no relief, nor pardon here."

The only thing that suits the case of a transgressor thus circumstanced, is, faith:—"that the promise (of justification) made known by the gospel of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe." Faith in the heart of such a sinner views Christ as a complete Deliverer; and trusts in his grace, wisdom, power, and merits, exclusively, for the remission of sins; agreeably to the language of the apostle;—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Lord, help me to pity those under condemnation, to pray for them, and to aim at their rescue by every possible means; and bestow upon me that fervent gratitude which a creature so rescued, so wonderfully saved, ought to feel.

NOVEMBER 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, lxviii.

“Thou hast ascended on high.” These words are quoted by the apostle, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, iv. 8. as a prophecy relative to Christ. They appear to belong to a sacred anthem sung at the return of the Redeemer to his throne in the heavens, after his victory over the enemies of man. But who are these enemies?—

1. *Sin.*—This enemy, reigning in the hearts of the children of men even unto death, he so subdued, that the sacred writers declare, “He has made an end of sin.” By taking away the power of the law over his people, he despoiled sin of its strength: and by giving his Holy Spirit, he will utterly exterminate it, so that sin shall not only have no dominion over them, but have no being in them, through all eternity.

The world.—This enemy the Redeemer has so overcome, that it can neither fatally allure, nor maliciously destroy: hence he says to his disciples,—“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

Satan.—This is the prince of the power of the air, and the very god of this world: he has led men captive at his will, and made both body and soul his captives. But Christ has bruised the serpent’s head; has set up the Divine kingdom in its power, and will cast out Satan from the hearts of all, and take up his own abode there.

Death and the Grave.—Before Christ came, he promised,—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” He triumphed over these enemies, so that his followers can say,—“O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? In the morning

of the resurrection, how completely will the grave lose its victory, when that which was sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption, glory, and power!

To crown the conquest; when he ascended on high, he closed the gates of hell, and opened the doors of heaven to all believers.—“They shall never perish: they shall not come into condemnation,” is the promise of the Conqueror respecting all his sincere followers.

There was something savage in the triumph granted to a Roman conqueror; but here all our best, our most benevolent feelings meet with their full gratification. Angels join us in the acclamations, and, as he enters heaven itself, they cry,—“Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the King of glory, shall come in.”

O to be a Christian! To be interested in all this blessedness! For Christ came not to deliver us from some one enemy, or some one calamity, but to annihilate at once every real foe, and every real danger.

NOVEMBER 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—James, ii.

The inattention of mankind to their own eternal interests is a most marvellous thing, when self-love is the predominant passion of the heart: and surely these eternal interests are far more our own interests than any present concerns can be. The fact is,—before christian conversion, we are awfully sensual, and earthly, and therefore are alive to that only which is familiar to our senses. Upon men in general the awful denunciations of the Divine word make no impression. To those who have some concern to be

right at last, this passage in the writings of the apostle,—“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all,”—has, perhaps, appeared harsh and unreasonable. Let us inquire what the apostle here means. He does not mean that some men will be condemned for only one deviation from the Divine law, nor that a man who has committed a fraud must necessarily have committed murder in this same crime. But he intends to affirm, that the disposition which leads a person to be guilty of one transgression, necessarily implies that he is prepared to offend God on all occasions; that one sin makes man a transgressor as really as a million; and that sin pollutes the soul, and introduces a moral indisposition which spreads itself through the whole man; that by the wilful commission of one transgression, the affections become polluted, the heart hardened, the understanding beclouded, the will intractable, and a moral death is diffused through the whole soul.

Hence Divine wrath being roused, the sinner becomes subject to the curse; and wrath, unless averted, comes upon him to the uttermost. We are not to wait, therefore, till we become greater sinners, before we repent, and fly from the wrath to come. Are we transgressors in one instance? To remove that sin, Christ must die, his blood must be shed, the law must be fulfilled by him as our Substitute, and the Divine Spirit must be sent to sanctify our nature, or there is no redemption; for “without shedding of blood is no remission,” and “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

“Who then can be saved?” None on the footing of personal holiness; none by looking to the law. It is true, the law says,—“Do this, and thou shalt live;” but then it means, Do it perfectly, do it unremittingly, and thou shalt live; but, if thou offend in one point, thou art guilty of all. The scripture, therefore, thus directs all who seek direction respecting the way of salvation,—“Look unto me, and

be ye saved." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "By grace are ye saved, through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast."

O that we could awaken our fellow-men to a thorough sense of their danger, and to a settled and awakening conviction that every foundation except the one laid in Zion, which is Christ Jesus, must give way, and leave them to perish.

NOVEMBER 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, x.

What think we of man? God, the Creator and Judge of the world, governs his rational creatures by a law, holy, just, and good. He has an entire right and property in man, so that, like a father, he expects not only outward obedience, but the affections of the soul: and as he knows the heart, he of course extends his jurisdiction over its thoughts and intentions. As a holy and sovereign Judge, he cannot do otherwise; and therefore it is said, he requires truth in the inward parts, and he searches the heart, and tries the reins. But men, being still ignorant of this, seek the Divine favour by their own obedience, notwithstanding its imperfection; pleasing themselves with the idea, that God will lower his demands to the level of their present powers. When the Divine law is held up to them in its extensive demands, they are not willing to submit themselves to the righteousness of God, but go about to establish their own. This is a snare, a fatal snare, in which multitudes perish; for it overturns the whole doctrine of justification by faith.

But it may be said, Wherefore then serves the law; and what is obtained by applying such a law to

the conscience, a law which cannot now be fulfilled by man? Does the Almighty rejoice, when we become vile in our own eyes, and when we lose all opinion of our own personal merit? When we do this, a great end is answered; the fatal snare in which the individual was held is broken; he is taught the extent of the commandment, and of his own depravity; sin is found to be exceeding sinful; he finds himself a wretched captive to sin, and that he is condemned by that law by which he once hoped to obtain life. The law now becomes his school-master, to bring him to Christ. The man thus taught, now submits to the righteousness of God, and is brought into the right way of acceptance; he perceives, to his surprise and joy, that Christ is the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. He now approaches God, not as the Pharisee, but as a sinner, to plead the Saviour's merits, and to accept of salvation as an act of infinite grace. He is now introduced, the law and justice of God consenting, into a state of nearness to the Almighty, so that he is invested with all the privileges of a person perfectly just and righteous.

How absurd, that a person who has offended so grievously should insist that he is righteous, because some of his actions have been pronounced good by his fellow-creatures! How fatal these attempts will be, the day of judgment will fully discover.

NOVEMBER 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Genesis, vi.

The loss of one soul is a calamity greater than the temporal destruction of the whole world by the flood. How dearly are those victories gained, which precipitate, unprepared, thousands at once into eternity!

But here is a world lost, lost to happiness never-ending. No wonder then that we read of its going to the very heart of God,—verse 6. To justify even figurative language like this, it could not have been a partial evil which was introduced by the first transgression, something that left the stamina of primitive integrity untouched; but the total loss of the Divine image must be intended; every imagination of man's heart became, from that sad hour, evil. The understanding, once radiant as the light of heaven, now became darkened, so that the knowledge of God, and of the way of real happiness, became extinguished, and men from that period sunk into the greatest idolatry, and the foulest crimes. The affections became polluted; man sought happiness only in present gratifications, and God, the Centre of attraction and happiness, was forsaken. The will, once according perfectly with the Divine mind, became obstinately bent on the pursuit of that which the passions preferred. The other powers partook of the general depravity. The consequences which followed were inevitable; man fell into condemnation, and became a child of wrath. This was their condition, when Jehovah “looked down from heaven upon the children of men;”—Psalm, xiv. 2, 3.

Such a state as this, over which the blessed God himself is represented as grieving at his very heart, and to recover man from which the Son of God himself came from heaven, and endured the deepest degradation, and the most bitter sufferings, must end in everlasting destruction. O that we could properly realize it! Then surely we should mingle our griefs with those of the Creator, and should be ready to add,—“O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night,” for this desolation, wide as the world, and vast as eternity! O fellow-sinner, shall the heart of God be thus affected with thy condition, and thy heart remain unmoved? Shall the body, the immaculate body, of Christ, bleed from every pore; shall he pour

out his soul unto death; and thy heart not bleed, when thou thyself art among the ruined, and the desolation extends to the whole of thy species?

But, blessed, blessed, for ever blessed, be the Almighty; he has found a ransom. Whatever guilt we have contracted; however impossible for us, considered in ourselves, to appear before God, and however deep the dire disease has gone, Christ has met the case, and he invites the perishing millions to come unto him and be saved; — “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside me there is none else.”

How can we be sufficiently thankful for that mercy which remembered us in our low estate; for that Saviour who gave his life up to the stroke of Divine Justice without a murmuring word: for those influences by which the day of mercy breaks upon us! Our obligations are boundless and eternal!

NOVEMBER 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, i.

The apostle declares, that in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Though these words contain a very deep mystery, they surely proclaim the Deity of our Lord in language too plain to deceive us. The Redeemer himself says to Philip,—“Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” Which of the Divine perfections do we not discover in the person, life, and miracles of Christ? In every miracle we see the power and goodness of God; in the tears shed at the grave of Lazarus, his pity; in sparing the worst of enemies, his clemency; in the choice of his disciples, his sovereignty; and in the transfiguration, his glory.

There is in the Saviour a fulness of *life*: — “I am come, that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” We mistake, if we suppose that there is not an essential oneness in what we call spiritual life and eternal life. Some of the Hindoo philosophers have said, Take away matter; and then the soul at once attains to supreme blessedness. The Christian philosopher says, Take away sin; and, through the life which Christ imparts, the soul will attain to perfect happiness. The idea has been suggested of restoring to vigour an emaciated and dying body, by introducing into it the warm blood of some other animal: this idea will bear to be transferred to the subject of our meditation: — “I am the Vine; ye are the branches: abide in me, and I in you; so shall ye bear much fruit.”

There is a fulness of *wisdom* in the Redeemer: — “He is made of God unto us wisdom.” “Ye are wise in Christ.” Through faith in him, the scriptures make men wise unto salvation. Christ makes wise also by the gifts he bestows on ministers, by the valuable books he enables men to write, by his providences, and by the teachings of his Spirit.

In Christ is a fulness of *merit*, so that believers “are complete in him.”

In him there is a fulness of *grace*: — “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.” His whole ministry, every hour of it, was a continued display of grace and benignity; all his words, his looks, and his actions, flowed from a heart made of tenderness: if he appear, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, the dead are raised, the ignorant are instructed, the mourners are comforted, and the streets of the city are filled with hosannahs, saying, — “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

When we are called to any difficult enterprise, to contend with enemies, or to conquer our own passions, let us remember that “it hath pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell.”

NOVEMBER 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, i.

One of the heaviest judgments which the Almighty ever inflicts upon a man in this world, is, to give him up to believe that his state is good while he is living without faith and hope in Christ. This is called “a strong delusion:” hence all those mentioned by the apostle in this connexion (verse 9, 10) have need to be warned,—“Be not deceived,” for ye cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This delusion is very much promoted by the false trust which men have in their having passed through the outward initiatory forms of Christianity. But this is a plain scripture decision, that no person living in a state of sin can be in a state of grace:—“His servants ye are, whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” All those who are now in the way to heaven were once unregenerate, but they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. We must be “made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,” or that inheritance we shall never possess. Let us not then deceive ourselves: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. Is it asked, why the unrighteous cannot enter heaven? It is answered, For the same reason that a traitor cannot be tolerated near the monarch against whose life and kingly authority he has rebelled; for the same reason that animals can live only in the elements suited to their natures. But what a loss do the unrighteous sustain by their exclusion from heaven! The loss of health is a most serious affliction; and so is the loss of sight, of personal or domestic happiness, of honour, of country, or of friends; when the loss of all these meet in one person, it forms an accumulation of misery inconceivably great. But a state of wrath implies the perfection of human misery! What horrors of mind are felt by those who, from a flood of gospel light,

pass into everlasting darkness! Oh! says such a lost spirit! Oh! that I should have neglected all the principles of the pious education bestowed upon me! How many passages I can now remember, imprinted on my memory even in infancy, which, if I had duly weighed and reduced to practice, would have saved me from this misery! Why did I listen to vicious counsels, and associate with ungodly companions? Did I not frequently tremble at my entrance on the paths which I anticipated would end here? How many sermons did I hear, but heard in vain! And now all these holy texts, all these faithful warnings, striking on my memory, harrow up my very soul. But God went still further to reclaim and save me: he again and again disappointed me in my plans; yea, he held me fast on the bed of sickness, and left conscience to do its work of reproof and conviction. But all was of no avail. Even a father's counsels and a mother's tears were despised. I seemed bent on my own ruin, and, had the whole world gone down on its knees to me, I believe I should still have followed and gratified the desires of the flesh and of the mind. I am lost; I am deservedly lost! I blame not God, I blame not my friends. I was resolved on ruin; and now it is come upon me to the uttermost, and I am a wretch undone.

NOVEMBER 12.

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

It is astonishing that men in general have so little sense of their sinfulness. To wound and grieve a friend is considered a great offence: yet God is our best Friend. Ingratitude to a benefactor is treated as an infamous crime; but who is such a Benefactor as God? Rebellion against a beneficent sovereign is detested in proportion to the amiableness and goodness of the monarch; but who among the kings of the

earth can be compared with the gracious Jehovah? To despise the counsels and resist the venerable authority of a parent, exposes a son to deserved infamy; but God is our heavenly Father, the Father of our spirits. All this combined atrocity is found in every sin; and, although men are sinning continually, they have no proper feelings on the subject; so that when this injured Being says,—“If I be a Father, where is my honour?” Men reply,—“Wherein have we robbed God” of his honour? So ignorant are they of the moral turpitude of their own actions.

The sins of such a person are palpable enough to others; he himself is constantly suffering through them; he often finds that the way of transgressors is hard; and yet these sufferings do not undeceive him. He sees God punishing men for their sins; he hears that Christ has died to atone for sin, that death is the fruit of sin, that judgment will follow death, and that there is an appointed place of punishment for sinners; yet none of these awakening truths excite the inquiry, What have mankind done, that all nature is thus clothed in sackcloth? What a proof, that the truth is not in such a person! For the same reason, just descriptions of the human character, whether contained in books, or delivered from the pulpit, are so ill received, so little believed.—“Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” But this blindness to his sin deprives men of all hope; for it is impossible that the benefits flowing from Christ should ever be truly sought, or obtained, unless the want of them has been felt: prayer is the language of want and of desire. The man therefore is fatally deceived; he sees not his danger, and therefore he cannot flee for refuge, nor enjoy security in the hope set before him: he cannot receive the blessing imparted to those who mourn for sin; he cannot confess and forsake it: he shall not therefore find mercy. How suitable, in connexion with this subject, is the advice of Dr. Young,—

“Man, know thyself,—all knowledge centres here.”

NOVEMBER 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ezekiel, xxxiii.

It is worthy of remark, that in his final dealings with his creatures, God admits of no punishment short of death;—"the soul that sinneth shall die." The Divine purity, justice, and goodness, require the death of the sinner; the law denounces it, and the Judge of all will inflict it. Such is the deplorable state in which every sinner stands: he is a condemned man.

But, adored be the God of all grace and consolation, the penitent shall not perish. He has caused to meet in Christ the iniquity of us all; and wherever the gospel comes, no man who believes what God has said respecting his state, and who comes to Christ for mercy, needs perish. Still it is to be feared, that, notwithstanding salvation may be had without penances and without price, many actually perish, and perish under the sound of the gospel too.

But here the Divine Beings asks us,—“Why will ye die?” Is there any thing in sin worth such a sacrifice? Is not sin your disease, your disgrace? Does it not rob you of your time, your peace of mind? Does it not fill your conscience with guilt and remorse, your mind with fear and dread? But is Christ unwilling to save, or dost thou think so, and therefore perishest? Has he not saved the greatest of sinners? Are not his invitations and promises enough to encourage thee, even if to thine own sins the guilt of the sins of the whole world were added? It cannot be, therefore, that thou canst truly make this excuse. But is it because heaven is not worth seeking, that thou art willing to lose it? That place which is the abode of the Majesty of Heaven; where angels reside; the place where saints possess everlasting life; whence all sorrow is banished; where there is no

more curse nor death; where, in short, there are pleasures for evermore.—Is this so mean a place, that thou canst be well content to die without it? Is future misery a trifle? The worm that never dieth; the fire which is never quenched? Can the wrath of the Almighty be a subject of indifference to a creature who is scared at his shadow, his dreams, the mere apprehension of a ghost?

Unbelief is, no doubt, a soul-destroying sin to many: they do not believe those things which should affect the mind, and produce that change of character which qualifies for heaven, and therefore they die in their sins. Some are content to die, falling a sacrifice to some inveterate habit, to some darling sin, which is preferred to Christ and heaven. Others are surfeited with the cares of the world, and thereby drowned in perdition: they have no time; and thus while they are busy here and there, behold, time is gone, the soul is gone. Others die, folding their hands together; religion requires too much anxious attention, and too much self-denial; they prefer present ease to any future good, the good which faith turns into substance.

How many are the snares by which men are deluded; and by which the soul is ruined! How sure the destruction of those who are not willing to forsake all and follow Christ!

NOVEMBER 14.

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

Genuine history has always been found a most happy means of instruction, especially for the young: this is particularly true of Scripture history. Believers under the Old Testament learnt much of the

excellency of the Divine perfections. David, when threatened with one of three judgments, said,—“Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man.” Jonah was afraid that if he denounced the Divine threatenings, God would repent him of the evil, and that he should be branded as a false prophet. Hezekiah, when threatened with the extinction of his race, said,—“Good is the word of the Lord;” and old Eli says,—“It is the Lord who thus threatens to judge my house for ever: I deserve his frown; let him do what seemeth him good.”

Any person may say in affliction,—“It is the Lord;” but it requires great piety or grace to add,—“Let him do what seemeth him good.” Whence can submission like this be derived? From proper views of the Divine goodness:—“He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

The Lord has promised that he will afflict us in measure; that he will support and comfort under the rod; and that his presence shall be with all his saints as they pass through the deep waters. In proportion as he is relied upon as the faithful Creator, the afflicted believer is enabled to say,—“Let him do what seemeth him good.”

Proper conceptions of the infinite wisdom which presides over all, must tend very much to break the force of affliction. Genuine submission teaches a person to say, He knows best what I want; and if he place me in the furnace, it is because he sees some dross which wants to be removed. He knows best how much sorrow I need, to answer the end of his visitation, and when I want it.

The design of gracious afflictions ought to produce submission: the Lord has declared that it is, to purify, that we may bring forth more fruit, and that, on account of some to us undiscovered sin, or a disposition to make this world our rest, there is a

necessity for this dispensation. To promote a greater experience of the power and blessedness of religion, also, to show us the vision of God, and to fit us for the vast destiny that awaits us, Divine Providence casts a gloom over all worldly things.

To have no God in affliction is the perfection of desolation: it is the very bitterness of death.

NOVEMBER 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Matthew, ix.
18—38.

The first symptom of a right mind is, a concern about a future state; and this concern is awakened by the threatenings against sin, and by the views of the spirituality and unbending authority of the Divine law, and of the fearful state of those who are lost. Where Satan cannot ruin the soul by unbelief, he keeps the mind incessantly occupied either in business or pleasure, that no time may be left for serious reflection. But, where the mind is truly awakened, the thunders of Sinai are heard louder and louder till the person can go on in transgression no longer. Then, like this woman, he seeks and adopts every possible expedient to obtain a remedy which shall heal his wounded spirit. In the history before us, we are struck with the extraordinary confidence of this woman; and yet the testimony she here gives is fully justified by the fulness of saving merit which is found in Christ. For, if a sinner in a state of inward trouble on account of sin, should be divinely assisted to look but once only by faith to the Redeemer, he would be made whole. Faith, when strong, glorifies God; but one look at Christ by faith may be sufficient for salvation, as one touch of his garment in this case produced an instantaneous cure.

If Christ be thus full of grace, full of benevolence, and at the same time full of saving virtue or power, how utterly inexcusable are all those who either neglect to come unto him, or who despise him; and how bitter must be the reflections of such unhappy persons in dying moments, and when they shall be placed at an infinite distance from him! 'O what could bewitch me, that when I had so fair an opportunity for salvation, I should so shamefully have neglected it! If I had but touched him, in the desires of my heart, and the prayer of my lips, I had been saved. Fool that I was, thus to miss of heaven, when so near the kingdom of grace, and when nothing was required of me but to touch and be healed. But now I cannot come near him: he never visits these abodes of horror and despair, and I am bound for ever in these chains of darkness, when the least effort would have raised me to a throne and a kingdom which never fade.'

NOVEMBER 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Proverbs, xiii.

"The way of transgressors is hard."—In a world like this, the proof of such a proposition cannot be difficult,—a world full of courts of justice, of severe laws, of chains, instruments of punishment, jails, gibbets, penitentiary houses, and a thousand other proofs that sin and misery go hand in hand. That this would be the case we might expect, not only from that which immediately befel the first transgressors, who were driven out of their paradise, but from the testimony of the Divine word:—"There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." "Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known." "It biteth like a serpent; it

stingeth like an adder." "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads."

But some one perhaps is ready to say, What need of proof in a case so clear and palpable? It would be well if this were generally admitted; but the feelings of mankind are in direct opposition. Does the drunkard, the rake, the voluptuary, imagine that the way of transgressors is hard? Is not this the general impression under which men act, That the ways of religion are gloomy and forbidding, but the ways of sin are all strewed with flowers?

Notwithstanding this impression, however, it will be no difficult matter to prove the truth of the wise man's statement.—1. The way or conduct of a sinner is a continual warfare with conscience: these stings torment him after every gross departure from the path of innocence; and the remembrance of past sins often makes his life a burden; the dread of a hereafter, of that fearful reckoning which awaits him, adds to the torment of his mind. These apprehensions are also strengthened by the presence of pious friends, by the recollections of lessons impressed on the mind in youth, by awful dispensations affecting himself or others.—2. There is an inward conviction that the pleasures of sense are but a poor portion, after all. The inward thirst and torment are not allayed by the deepest draughts at the muddy spring. The tranquil state of the pious man is often the subject of secret envy. If there were no stream of opinion and custom carrying him along, the sinner would be apt to renounce his ways, from mere vexation and disappointment; and indeed many do this, who never come into the way of peace.—3. This statement is more than proved, when we consider that the end of these things is death,—the loss of heaven, the loss of an immortal soul, incurred for the sake of gratifications which habit and custom alone could force down, and these gratifications attended with continual torment.

This is the lot of common transgressors. But how

often does Providence give eminent demonstrations of the truth of this passage, in the diseases which follow transgression ! After a midnight revel, the wretch perhaps pays the reckoning by an untimely death ; and many thousands perish by diseases arising immediately out of a series of transgression. How often does sin involve the person in difficulties, beggary, and misery, which make him afraid of the face of man, of his wife, his children, his relations, his creditors ! How often do crimes banish men from public society, and from their country, or end in an ignominious death. If demonstration be still sought, visit the Fleet prison, visit Newgate, the Hulks, the Magdalen. Visit the families of the victims of transgression in their miserable garrets. If all these sights fail to produce conviction, visit Gethsemane, visit Calvary ; and if you ask why this Divine Person is thus overwhelmed with horror, why these bitter cries, these dying groans from the Son of God, which make the sun retire, convulse the earth, and raise the very dead, the prophet will inform you,—“ He is wounded for our transgressions,—the chastisement of our peace is laid upon him.”

NOVEMBER 17.

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

At the present day there appears to be much ground of fear, that the gospel comes to multitudes only in word and sound : a being charmed with the preacher, and loving the word, are very different things. That men might be deceived by feeling an attachment to a preacher, while they had no sense of the authority of the word in their consciences, appeared to be a very possible thing to the Apostle Paul : he says, therefore, that he avoided philosophical speculations, and the persuasive words of man's wisdom ; that the faith of the Corinthians might

not stand "in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

From many passages of scripture it is plain, that the great truths of the gospel on the hearts of true Christians have a force and power which make them thoroughly influential:—"Our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power." The gospel here means the doctrines which the apostles preached; and thus perhaps the passage would have been explained by the apostle himself,—'When I preached to you, that you were in a state of total sinfulness and absolute condemnation, your consciences became alarmed, and you began to seek for mercy. When I invited you by the promises of the gospel to come to Christ for pardon, justification, sanctification, and everlasting life, you were moved to come by faith and prayer, and you gave yourselves up to Jesus Christ in the way of his appointment; and when I urged upon you, that you must become holy men, as a necessary proof of your being the subjects of true repentance and saving faith, you "gave all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Thus the blessed gospel which we preached, carried its own credentials to your very hearts, and ye became the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men: the terrors of the word made you serious, sober, devout, watchful, and distrustful of yourselves. The consolations of the gospel made you delight in Christ as the Centre of your affections, the Object of your faith, the Foundation of your hope, the Source of your joy, your Pattern, your King, and your everlasting Portion.

NOVEMBER 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Thessalonians, v.

The doctrine of the Trinity, however mysterious, contains the whole body of Divine truth. The Holy

Spirit is represented as the Source of all inward holiness, the Energy which excites to all holy actions: hence in regeneration men are said to be "born of the Spirit;" the faith by which we are justified, is said to be of "the operation of God;" and in Galatians, the apostle ascribes all christian virtues to the Spirit, when he says,—*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* In his first letter to the church at Corinth, the apostle compares believers to a temple, and reminds them that the Spirit of God dwells in them as such: and he takes opportunity hence to exhort them to purity in heart and life, adding this anathema,—*"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."* But in the passage which occurs for our meditation to day, the Holy Spirit is compared to fire, as he is in one or two other parts of Scripture. In his descent upon the apostles, it is said,—*"There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon them."* Now this is the idea of the apostle, when he says,—*"Quench not the Spirit,"* that is, Quench not those influences which warm and vivify every holy and heavenly principle within you.

These Divine influences, this holy flame in the soul, may be quenched:—1. By levity of conduct; the Holy Spirit, like a dove, dwells in the calm and tranquil shade;—2. By worldly-mindedness, which makes the soul insensible to the calls and admonitions of the Spirit;—3. By ungodly associations; for he is the *Holy* Spirit, and the appointed Sanctifier of Christians;—4. By the reception of error; for he is the Spirit of truth; and, 5. By backsliding in heart or life; for he leaves that soul which remains no longer a fit habitation for the blessed God.

O that I may beware of losing the source of my life, my happiness, and my usefulness. Remember, O my soul, what a condescension it is, that the Blessed Spirit will dwell in such a heart as thine; and what a loss thou wilt sustain if he depart: thou wilt

become barren and desolate; Satan will take possession of the room which had been cleansed and garnished; and thy last state will be far worse than the first:—"O Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

But perhaps he has withdrawn. In this case let us entreat his speedy return, and never rest till he restore unto us the joys of his salvation. For our encouragement, he is called "a free Spirit," or a free Gift; hence our Lord says,—“How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!”

NOVEMBER 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—3 John.

The religion of Christ breathes nothing but benevolence to men; and though it throws into the shade all our present interests, when brought in competition with eternal realities, it does not forbid us to wish well to our friends even in the most common concerns of life. The shame is, that men in general, in their common salutations, and in their expressions of good-will towards each other, have no respect whatever to the health and prosperity of the mind; and, what is bodily health and outward prosperity, if the soul be absolutely perishing!

A true Christian, in a state of spiritual health, has a blessed sense of the forgiveness of his sins in the enjoyment of that tranquillity of conscience which is called "the peace of God." He has delightful access to God as his heavenly Father; and in his approaches to the throne of grace, finds that filial confidence, that ability to commit his dearest temporal interests to the Divine guidance and direction, which fill him with a joy as pure as it is satisfactory. He enjoys in a high degree all other means of spiritual improvement, so

that he becomes like a tree planted by the streams of water. He has unclouded prospects of that Canaan which he loves ; the fear of death is happily removed ; the prospects of a joyful resurrection fill him with delight ; and the hope of the intermediate enjoyment of the presence of Christ in heaven produces a calm and tranquil blessedness which is the foretaste and very commencement of eternal life.

This is a very imperfect view of what the apostle means, when he rejoices in the prosperity of Gaius. The way to attain it, is, to be fervent in prayer, and to be watchful in the cultivation of an evangelical frame of mind, and in the suppression of all the angry, the sordid, and the sensual passions. In short, it is to live near to God in our daily approaches to him, and to walk humbly before him.

NOVEMBER 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Luke, xxiii.

It is a great comfort to dying persons to have their friends near them. To aggravate our Lord's sufferings, the Jews gave him two thieves, expiring in slow tortures, to be with him in his last moments ; both of whom, it should seem, railed on him, and endeavoured to add to his anguish, instead of assuaging his grief ;—he was thus “ numbered with the transgressors.”

The curiosity of mankind is greatly excited respecting the feelings and conduct of persons in their last hours, especially persons who suffer for great crimes. In this history we have the last hours of two thieves dying on the same spot with the Saviour of the world. One of them, though on the brink of eternity, forgetting his own circumstances, and all the claims of humanity, perseveres in railing at Christ, and adding to the horrors of his crucifixion.

The other, at first, joins his companion in this desperate and unfeeling attack ; but, at length, he rebukes his fellow-sufferer, shows his fear of God, acknowledges the justice of his sentence, and in his prayer to Christ gives one of the clearest displays of the power of faith, which is to be found in the Divine records : for how should this man see in the Saviour's circumstances any thing to induce him to call him " Lord ?" yet he says,—“ Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.” We may safely apply the Apostle John's words, as literally understood, to this case ;—“ No man calls Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” But he speaks also of a kingdom. How could he imagine that Christ, who had always been poor, and was now in the lowest state of distress, like one abandoned of God and man, could have a kingdom ? What an eye is that of faith ! Here it penetrates through all the darkness that surrounds the cross, and says with Stephen,—“ Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.” The answer of Christ shows how much he delighted in his faith :—“ This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

In this history we have a most striking display of the following glorious truths :—1. That Christ can save the worst of sinners, in the very worst circumstances. That this man was a notorious offender, there can be little doubt, and that he came to Calvary wholly impenitent, is proved by his having railed on his fellow-sufferer after they were nailed to the cross ; no repentance, no prayer, no predisposing goodness ; but Christ says to him, when he is evidently in his sins and in his blood, Live.—2. That the grace or compassion of Christ extends to the most miserable and unworthy of the human race. He does not scorn the meanest name : he does not upbraid this man for delaying to seek his face till he was about to expire, nor for his reviling him ; but he shows, that he was the same to-day as he had been during all his ministry, as he had been to the

woman taken in adultery, and to Peter, "full of grace."—3. That the Holy Spirit can prepare a person for glory in the very shortest time. This man was full of sin and depravity, an hour, perhaps, before he entered paradise; and yet all that was necessary to prepare him for the holiest of all, was accomplished in him, all that is included in regeneration, and in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.—4. We see that nothing can prevent the salvation of a coming sinner, come when he will; that it is not any deficiency in the Divine mercy, or in the efficacy of the operations of the Divine Spirit, that prevents the salvation of those who begin to repent on a death-bed: that it depends on the preparations of the heart in man, which are wholly from the Lord; and, that if He prepare the heart to receive mercy, that mercy will be found even in the last hour.—5. That salvation is all of grace.

What an affecting relation is here! How encouraging! And yet how alarming! If such a sinner is saved in such circumstances, who need despair? But if his salvation was suspended upon the sovereignty of God, the grace of Christ, and the preparatory influences of the Holy Spirit, then who dare presume? O Lord, may I "seek thee while thou art to be found, and while thou art nigh to all that call upon thee."

NOVEMBER 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, vi.

With what anxiety do persons long confined for debt look forward to an act of insolvency,—and how eagerly do they listen to every flying report of the probability of such an event! But, O what a sound is that of "Never, never," when realized in the place of final punishment! No jubilee, no day of grace, no proclamation of liberty, there.—"The wages of sin

is death." On reading this, some one perhaps is ready to ask, What then is sin, that its punishment should be of everlasting duration? In answer to this, we would say, Inform us what God is, and then we can tell you what sin is. Sin has an offensiveness, a malignity in it, which we have never comprehended. This, however, we may affirm, that, after we have acknowledged that Christ died for our sins, the everlasting punishment of impenitent offenders ceases to be beyond our belief. We are apt to look only at the outward action, and the manner in which the interests of men are affected by it. But the evil of sin consists in its being an act of treason against God. It was this view of his sin which so afflicted the Psalmist, although the offences comprised nothing less than murder and adultery;—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Added to this, we are to consider, that transgression is not only an act of rebellion, but that it poisons the soul, and fills it with enmity against God, and so spreads its baneful influence, that the whole soul becomes one mass of corruption. If it be still objected, that this punishment appears to militate against the gracious invitations of scripture, we must take into the account, that the sufferer never desired the Divine favour, was never affected by God's goodness, so as to be led to repentance, never really desired heaven, but chose death rather than life. Nor are we to consider the Almighty as acting under the influence of what we call the irascible passions. In these judgments he is moved alone by the consideration of doing that which will be right, and which will be for the highest good of the universe. It is sufficient for every one who fears and loves God, to know, that "the Judge of all the earth will do right."

But blessed be God for a ray of hope in the gospel:—"the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—The blessing which God thus

freely gives, is called "life," "eternal life," free from all curse, sickness, and death: it is not eternal old age and decrepitude, but eternal youth, health, and vigour; eternity filled up with enjoyments which never grow old; eternity surrounded by happy and most agreeable friends; eternity filled up with unfatiguing and most improving employments; eternity in entire nearness and likeness to God; eternity in the presence of the Lamb; never-ending duration given to the redeemed, to celebrate his praise, and express their unceasing obligations to him who died for them and rose again.

NOVEMBER 22.

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

Christians think too little on the intercessions of Christ, in their approaches to God. The perpetuity of Christ's intercessions is mentioned by the apostle as a proof that he can evermore save.—1. The office of intercessor under the former dispensation was exercised by the high-priest, who was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, and who made atonement for the people with the blood of bulls and of goats. There is a great propriety in Divine mercy being thus bestowed on sinners through an intercessor; since the Almighty hereby preserves his own dignity, his honour as a holy Governor, and causes a sense of our unworthiness to remain on our minds.—2. The fitness of the Lord Jesus for this office will appear, if we consider the dignity of his person, his acceptableness to God, his blood of atonement, his righteousness, the arguments he has to offer, the affection he bears to sinners, and his perfect knowledge of their case.—3. But how does he intercede? He appears before the throne in the body in which he was incarnate, and which bears the marks that in this crucified body

he became an offering for sin: this sacrifice is always before God: if he actually presents petitions as we do on earth, they are founded on his merits, his death, his finished work. He thus intercedes for his people, in all cases in which they need his Divine aid, individually and collectively:—"I have prayed for thee." "I pray for them." It appears also probable, from Revelation, viii. 3, 4, that our Saviour presents the prayers of his saints to the Father. — 4. We are sure, that Christ is successful in all his supplications, and in every cause which he undertakes:—"I know that thou hearest me always." He does not take a case before a prejudiced and biassed Judge:—"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you."

What encouragement then to come "boldly to the throne of grace," and to come in the most discouraging circumstances! The advocateship of our Lord Jesus Christ has a special reference to such circumstances, rather than to our common wants:—"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father."

How desolate the case of those who both in death and judgment have no intercessor, no deliverer near! Their despair may be judged of, when we hear them calling upon the solid rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from the Judge.

NOVEMBER 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, xiv.

"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am."—Who does not perceive here the amazing difference between the righteous and the wicked? It is the undeviating method of the wicked to bar off the recollection of their mortality: hence they rush into business, they welcome amusement, they plunge into

scenes of gaiety and dissipation. But the Psalmist wishes that death may become the divinely-impressed subject of his meditation. To what is this difference of feeling to be ascribed?

Death is a most important subject for contemplation as a penal evil; as involving in it inconceivably momentous consequences; and also as it terminates all intercourse with the means of saving instruction. If the public means have not been blessed to our conversion while in health, there is little dependance to be placed upon the feelings excited by pain, and the presence of the last enemy. Let us "not be deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap." The pains endured, the earthly anxieties which are felt, and the weakness of the mental energies, in the last conflict, are awful barriers against a proper preparation to meet God. Death terminates the state of probation on earth: the Hindoos and Roman Catholics imagine that something may be done for the salvation of the dead; but the language of Divine Revelation is,— "There is no device, nor work, nor repentance in the grave whither we go:" then he that is righteous will remain so for ever, and he that is impure will remain so for ever. Revelation, xxii.

These and similar reflections on death will bring home the necessity of a due preparation, consisting in repentance, faith in the Redeemer, and a change of disposition. To quicken him in this all-necessary work, the Psalmist prays that he may be led to meditate on the brevity and uncertainty of life,—"the measure of his days, and the frailty of his existence;" and that, under the impressions inspired by these meditations, he may give up all confidence in the strength of his frame; renounce the fascinations and cares of the world; and adopt this sacred resolution,—

"Now I forbid my carnal hope,
My fond desires recal;
I give my mortal interest up,
And make MY GOD MY ALL."

That all these lessons may be effectual for his salvation, he prays for Divine influence,—“ Lord, do thou make me to know my end.”

NOVEMBER 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Titus, iii.

All mankind by sin are become the children of the wicked one, John, viii. 44. They are born in his image, attached to his cause, and do his will. From this state the people of God are redeemed by Christ; they are born again, and are brought to wear the image of their Divine Parent; being regenerated and adopted, they receive the disposition of children, which is termed “the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.” They love their Father, and they manifest this love by their fear of offending him, by their grief if they should offend, by a high reverence for his name and honour, by a strong attachment to his word, to his house, and to his children. These are clear and distinct marks, that they belong to God, and these marks are visible upon real Christians of every name, and of every variety of opinion.

How important then the inquiry, Are we the children of God? Upon this depends our whole salvation. If children, then heirs, heirs of God. But who shall describe what this means,—“heirs of God?” We know what it is to be an heir to a vast inheritance, to a crown; but what is it to be an heir of Him who sways the sceptre of universal dominion? How rich, how honourable such a person shall be, and what dignities await him, who can tell? Even an inspired writer acknowledges his inability to describe this happiness;—“Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” The apostle says, as inclusive of whatever we can be, that we shall be like the Redeemer, and be made

capable of seeing him as he is; this includes much, for to know Christ as he is, requires that we should have attained to something of his elevation. To appreciate great moral perfection, requires great moral powers. To be an heir of God, then, must include the possession of something of his nature, his holiness, his capacity. But we are to be joint-heirs with Christ, by which may be understood, that some of that glory which was given to Christ as the reward of his undertaking will be put upon all the redeemed: with this agrees what our Lord uttered in that remarkable prayer in the seventeenth of John, — “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.”

All this blessedness and glory is however suspended upon this, Are we the children of God? If we are, then welcome poverty, welcome obscurity, since, “when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.”

NOVEMBER 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, ix.

During winter the vegetable world appears in a state of death: the tribes of plants have suffered a suspension of life, their fragrance is dried up, their beauties are fled, and the very stems of many are mouldered into dust. All is then sterility, all wears the appearance of death; and we seem to be in the very house of mourning. But shortly we are enabled to say to the innumerable families of plants, covered with leaves and blossoms, and dressed in their gayest attire, You hath he quickened, who were apparently dead.

Something like this barrenness prevails in the soul till the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and till Divine influences, “like the dew upon the tender herb, and like showers that water

the earth," descend upon the mind. We are "dead in trespasses and sins." There is this difference between the natural and the moral world; the vegetables contain a principle of life, but the sinner is both externally and internally dead.

What an awful condition! Dead to every interesting object, to every thing essential to life and happiness, and alive only to the means of self-destruction! But, blessed be God, he quickens those who were dead; and this resurrection resembles that in nature; religion, at first, seems to bud in the mind; tender impressions are wrought, and faint desires are excited. The buds next break forth into blossom: the quickened person is seen anxious to hear, to read, and to converse on the things of God; his descriptions of religion are all florid; he is full of love to Christ and his people; and he pities all around him not blessed with his impressions. After the blossoms wither, the fruit begins to form and to grow; and after the first warmth of his zeal has cooled, the Christian grows in grace and knowledge; he becomes more solid in his judgment, and is capable of being a greater blessing to others, till, as a shock of corn, fully ripe, he be gathered into the garner. On his death-bed he exhibits a mind full of submission, weaned from the world, swallowed up in God, the Fountain of Life.

NOVEMBER 26.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, iv.

To believers the Divine Spirit is the Source of all life, of all grace; hence the christian graces are called "the fruits of the Spirit." Believers, on account of grieving the Spirit, may for a time have this Divine Guest taken from them in a great measure, and they may awfully decline from the paths of truth. This

was what David dreaded : but he had still the spirit of prayer, and this was a sure sign that God had not forsaken him.

In cases where these influences are refused and quenched before they have produced a real change of heart, the Almighty not unfrequently casts the person off; and takes away the blessed Spirit utterly. This judgment often falls on men who had been remarkably favoured of God : he now gives them up to their own delusions, to believe and to embrace some fatal error, that their destruction may be sure. Whether they have sinned or not against the Holy Ghost, so that they cannot be forgiven ; if his influences be taken away, they cannot become the subjects of true repentance, or faith, and therefore they cannot come into a state of salvation. They now sin without fear ; they rush into destructive errors, and at length, perhaps, they fall into great horrors of conscience. Among scripture examples of persons thus given up to sin, despair, and ruin, may be quoted, those of Cain, Saul, and Judas.

Such cases continue to be familiar. O that we may be anxious not to grieve the Holy Spirit, by evil tempers, carnal indulgences, pride of intellect, or by our easily besetting sins ! May we cherish those influences by which we may be wise to salvation, be victorious over sin, the world, and Satan, and become fruitful in every good word and work ! David had great reason to fear, lest God should cast him off ; for the offences which he laments in this chapter were flagrant ; they would have been so in a private person, and in a heathen, but in one so favoured, so exalted, so extensively known, as a professor of religion, they assumed a frightful magnitude. The wicked plead the example of the Psalmist, and harden themselves in sin to this day. Aware of all these circumstances, no wonder the penitent with a trembling heart thus prayed ; — “ Cast me not away from thy presence.”

NOVEMBER 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Galatians, v.

Most parents are very anxious to prepare their children for future life, by education, and by communicating to them, at a great expense of time and labour, the knowledge of some art or profession: these are prospective acts, and show a laudable concern for the future good of their offspring. Indeed almost the whole of life is spent in providing for an uncertain future, in reference either to ourselves or to others. But if all this care, and cost, and labour, be justly employed on an uncertain and momentary future, by what name of folly shall we brand the conduct of those who make no provision for a future, which is to be eternal in its duration, and connected with the most exquisite happiness or misery!

Some persons appear to a certain degree anxious, but they mistake in the proper means of securing the happiness of the future state: they rest in christian baptism, or in something short of real preparation, which is never secured till we have an interest in the atonement, till we display a mind to which God himself can become united, and till we be capable of enjoying an eternity of happiness in a state of consummate holiness. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Way to acceptance, justification, and future blessedness; and christian faith is that, and that alone, by which the blessings of salvation can become ours. This faith avails to cancel sin, to justify the person, and to unite the soul to Christ, by which union are secured to us all holy influences, all privileges, all security, and all the blessings purchased by his death.

This faith, it is said, works by love; it puts the true believer upon a life of christian activity, and is itself animated by love, and not by the terrors of a conscience struggling to obtain life by the law. This

love by which faith works has regard to the Saviour, to his word, his people, his ordinances, and whatever is his. Hence we may know whether this faith dwell in us or not. Have we its fruits in our hearts and lives? It is impossible that a person can believe that Christ has done so much for him, that he is so full of grace and of every Divine perfection, without loving him; and if he be loved, his people will share in our attachment; and every thing by which we gain a greater knowledge of him, and nearness to him, will have a place in our hearts.

NOVEMBER 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, lii.

There is no person, however dear to him, whom the believer so much wishes to see as Jesus Christ. The countenance of a friend is pleasant; but the Saviour is no common Friend; he is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. O to see this adorable Person, this infinite Benefactor, this mysterious Individual, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But who could bear to see him as the man of sorrows, “with his visage so marred more than any man, and his form marred more than the sons of men?”

Born at an inn, a place, probably, resembling those in India, consisting of ten or twelve straw huts formed in the three sides of a square: here, probably, in a large earthen vessel, used to hold the food of cattle, was placed the infant Saviour. His youth was spent in similar poverty; his parents were poor, his home mean, and his food coarse and scanty. When he entered on his ministry, he had not money, even with the assistance of the disciples, to pay one of the

taxes, and he said,—“Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” But the treatment which he met with from his own nation must have been still more painful:—“He came to his own, but his own people received him not:” he is despised and insulted, and his life hunted after. The low state of religion among these children of Abraham must also have added greatly to his sorrow. He was grieved at the hardness of their hearts: he was hindered from doing many miracles because of their unbelief. Our Lord’s mind at the last supper was, no doubt, full of heavy sorrow, though this is not mentioned; to have before him the eleven persons, for the last time, whom he so tenderly loved, and whose weakness was exceedingly great; to look forward to all the troubles which awaited them on earth; to see them butchered one by one, after enduring incredible sufferings for his name; and to sit at the same table, and eat from the same dish, with Judas; all this may well be supposed to have filled him with grief. What must he have felt, when he said, This is my body,—this is the blood of the new covenant! Let us follow him into the garden: his chief sorrows hitherto have come through the agency of man: but now he is to suffer from an unseen hand, and that is to be the hand of a Father: here, without employing disease, or the hands of wicked men, without the lightning or the thunder, God’s invisible hand pours a sense of wrath into the heart of Christ, by which he becomes exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and being in an agony his sweat is as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and he cries,—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not my will but thine be done.” Next, he is betrayed by Judas, seized by ruffians in his retirement, and brought as a lamb before his butchers. Here see the Judge of all standing at the bar of a poor worm, where he is arraigned, insulted, spit upon, smitten, and scourged by his creatures. See him, next, carrying his cross,

nailed to it, suspended upon it, the whole brutish multitude endeavouring, by every species of rudeness and insult, to add to the horrors excited in his spotless soul, while he sinks under his Father's wrath. He utters his agonies in the mysterious cry,—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” A deep groan escapes him, he bows his head, and gives up the ghost.

But why was Christ thus a Man of Sorrows? God does not afflict even a worm willingly; yet “it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” Here we behold the infinite mercy and justice, the goodness and severity, of God; the extreme guilt and danger of man; and the utter impossibility of escape, as it regards the impenitent. If God spared not his own Son, will he spare a rebel worm?

NOVEMBER 29.

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

God has planted within us a witness for himself. It was, before the fall, the sun of the soul; it acted like the magnetic needle, as an infallible guide, and served instead of a written revelation: at every approach of sin, it gave the alarm. But by the apostasy the conscience has become depraved, like the other powers of the soul. In many, the conscience is deceived; it revolts from many criminal actions, while it tolerates crimes of another description. It thus operated in the Pharisees, especially in Saul of Tarsus; it thus acts in modern persecutors, and in all those who expect salvation by the merit of works. When men thought they were serving God in putting to death those they called, “the heretics,” they were misled by a deceived conscience. But the

consciences of others are hardened or seared, so that they can perpetrate the most atrocious crimes without remorse: these persons are spoken of as being "past feeling."

But the apostle, in these words, says of himself and others,—“We hope we have a *good* conscience.” How did they obtain it? For Paul’s conscience was at one time so full of evil, that he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Like the other powers of the mind, the conscience undergoes a change, and is made good; by the doctrine of the atonement it is set right on the great point of acceptance with God, and is also made tender by the implantation of the fear of God, by a knowledge of the extent of duty, and by the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

A conscience may be truly called a good one, when it enjoys peace through faith in the blood of Christ; when it is pure, that is, when it is kept void of offence towards God and man; and when it is tender, acting like the sensitive plant, at the most distant approach of sin. A good conscience acts also as a witness, bearing its testimony to the understanding, that the person is acting rightly; — “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.” Some persons who are truly sincere, have weak consciences, owing to the want of more scriptural light. Such need to study the Divine word, and bring their feelings to that standard; for the conscience cannot now, even in established Christians, be trusted without a constant reference to the Divine Testimonies. We have seen some of the holiest men contending with a most unchristian zeal for things which are not to be found in the word of God. Let us beware of a seared conscience, a conscience which will not give the alarm though the person be on the very brink of ruin.

NOVEMBER 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xiii.

The consciences of almost all mankind give in this verdict, That he is a happy man, who is enabled to follow religion fully, notwithstanding the sacrifices he may make, the obloquy he may incur, and the self-denial he may practise. Men of the most irreligious lives, in the hour of adversity, fly to religion. Cardinal Wolsey could say,—“Had I served God as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my last hours.” Even the greatest criminals endeavour to draw happiness, at the hour of execution, from the christian treasury.

Follow the faith of those who are your guides; remembering that the object of their whole conversation on earth is, to win Christ, who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. The apostle in another place avows this to be the object of his christian life, — “To win Christ, and be found in him.”

Follow their faith, as realizing the infinite superiority of the prize it has in view to every thing that can be acquired and enjoyed in the present state. But especially follow their faith as having for its Object the unchangeable Saviour. This was the blessed prize they set before them; to attain this was the grand object of their whole converse and all their actions on earth. All other portions are subject to sudden accidents and alarming changes; but this portion, as the whole church has found it in past ages, remains, and will remain, the same for ever. He is the same as at the grave of Lazarus,—as when he said to the tempest,—“Peace, be still!”—as when he said,—“It is finished!”—as when he comforted his disciples before he ascended on high, saying,—“I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” He will be the same

in grace, in patience, in tenderness, in faithfulness, in ability to succour and save, to the end of time; and the same Object of praise, adoration, perfect confidence, and exultation, for ever. Or, the apostle might mean, Jesus Christ is the Sum and Substance of their conversation:—when they speak, it is of him; or preach, it is of him; when they suffer, it is for him; when they glory, it is in him; he is All. This identifying of Christ in all their labours, and in all their intercourse with men, is the fruit of their faith: therefore follow this faith, and may it live in you in all its heavenly fruits and effects.

Should another exposition be adopted,—Follow the faith of your christian teachers, considering the glorious triumphs in death to which it leads, we might say,—Look at their joyful departure, even in the midst of dreadful sufferings, and the insults of their tormentors. May these proofs of the value of the gospel in the hour of dissolution lead us to follow those who through faith and patience now inherit the promises! Some infidels have died quietly and sullenly; but they have supplied no instances of what can be called “happy deaths.”

DECEMBER 1.

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

It is a great mercy that the Almighty has given to unlearned Christians an evidence of the truth of the Bible perfectly within their reach. The man who had been born blind took strong ground, when he said,—“Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes.” So a Christian might say,—“Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye knew not the origin of this book, and yet it has opened mine eyes to see my sin and danger; it has led me to Christ, to trust in him and obey him;

it has reformed my life; it has comforted me in affliction; it has guided me through various difficulties; and, resting on its promises, I am supported in the prospect of all which lies before me in time and in eternity.

But the christian doctrine does not exclusively and absolutely depend upon any thing written. It existed and spread through the then-known world before any copies of the New Testament were extant. The Apostle Paul exultingly appeals to the substantial proofs exhibited in his ministry, of the genuineness of the apostolic testimony, — “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth;” and the promise is: — “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

These effects form a solid proof to every convert, of the Divine origin of the gospel, and of his own interest in its blessings. When an unconverted sinner hears the gospel, or reads it, or has it brought to his remembrance, so as permanently to affect his mind, new light is conveyed to his understanding, by which he obtains a knowledge of his character and state as a sinner, of God as the Lawgiver, and of Christ as the Saviour; and this knowledge, by its effects on his present feelings and future life, is proved to come from above. He becomes humbled at the view of his sin, alarmed at the sight of his danger, and of the purity and justice of the Lawgiver, and consoled and encouraged by the discoveries now made to him respecting the grace and power of the Saviour. The knowledge he had obtained before might have been considerable, even in religion; but it never produced convictions, impressions, resolutions, and effects like those of which he is now conscious. He cannot therefore be at a loss to what power to attribute it; especially as such effects are promised, and instances of their appearance given, in the gospel.