

and the first Christians met in the synagogues, and turned their own premises into houses for God.

What may we suppose to be the cause among true believers of this attachment to the house of God?

1. They love the place appointed for worship, be it where or what it will; because Christ has promised to meet his people there. David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that he might "behold the beauty of the Lord."—2. It is the place where they meet with regular instruction, comfort, reproof, and establishment in righteousness.—3. Here they hope their children and friends may be made wise unto salvation.—4. It is the centre of union to those who love God, and where sacred times and ordinances are preserved, prayer offered, and plans formed for the extension of the Divine kingdom.—5. Here they have often been refreshed, and stimulated to obedience; and here they hope they are training up for the kingdom of heaven.

Let us be careful that our attachment to the house of God be not a carnal one; but that we love it because we can say with Jacob, Verily God is in this place.

SEPTEMBER 1.

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

The human mind requires a principle to impel it forward, and to draw forth its powers of exertion. The world supplies to the unconverted, in the objects they pursue, an impelling principle: in one man it is the love of gain; in another the love of applause, and in another the love of sensual indulgence.

Religion supplies a principle far nobler than these; and, were it not for the counteracting force of depravity, with one far more efficacious: this is, the love of Christ. We have a most pathetic display of the force of this principle in the case of Mary Magdalene,

(John, xx.) and another, in 2 Corinthians, xi. Could we have asked the Apostle Paul, why he endured these incredible labours, stripes, imprisonments, journeyings, perils by water, by robbers, by the Jews and heathens, perils in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren, why he bore such weariness; we are sure he would have said, — “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself.” “What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” “The love of Christ bears me away.”

But how does the mind become possessed of this Divine principle, which subdues all the selfishness of the heart, and carries a man beyond himself? Some persons are so affected by the views of their own sinfulness and extreme danger, that they are ready to despair of a remedy; when brought out of this horrible pit, this gloomy dungeon, they think they can never be sufficiently grateful to their Great Deliverer; — the love of Christ bears them away.

These views of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ excited the apostle to meditate on all his deeds of mercy, and on his whole work as a Saviour. The more he thinks, hears, and reads, of Christ, the more this love becomes a refined, expanded, and expanding principle: it fills his conversation, and becomes the subject of his sweetest melodies. He ardently pursues his glory; his very name affords joy to his heart; he longs for the universal extension of his kingdom; and wishes to die, that he may be with his Lord for ever.



SEPTEMBER 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, ix. 1—18.

It is the general doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, that salvation is of the Lord :—“The salvation of the

righteous is of me, saith the Lord." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." "Who were born, not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The descriptions of the spiritual state of man found in the Bible fully confirm this doctrine, which is further established by the confessions of the righteous, in which they ascribe all the praise of their salvation to grace, as well as by the feelings of perfect spirits in heaven, whose incessant gratitude to Christ is expressed in their songs of praise.

Yet the pride of man leads him to think, that he is not so fallen, as that he should be at God's sovereign disposal for life or death, deserving to die, and having no claims on the Divine mercy. Can men deserve death? Yes,—"*The wages of sin is death.*" There is nothing which a good man has a deeper sense of than this, that he is what he is, only by the grace of God.

But there is another awful part of this subject:—"Whom he will he hardens." It is not here meant, that God hardens their hearts, by any positive exertions of his power upon them; but that, by his not executing his sentence against their evil works speedily, he allows them to go on in their wickedness, and so become worse and worse. The will of God is always in unison with infinite rectitude and goodness.

SEPTEMBER 3.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, xxii.

The mercy of God is most plainly exhibited in scripture as boundless and free, as "from everlasting to everlasting." These are some of the expressions of David respecting it:—"The multitude of thy tender mercies."—"Thy mercy is great above the heavens."—"Thy mercy endureth for ever." This mercy expresses itself thus;—"Let the wicked

forsake his way, and the Lord will have mercy upon him." "The Lord is good; his mercy is from everlasting." "The eye of the Lord is upon those who hope in his mercy."

But these truths may be abused: wicked men may encourage themselves in sloth and impenitence, from the idea that God is full of mercy; and others may flatter themselves that they have power to take the water of life without the Divine assistance. Religious desires are implied in the invitation. All men, it is true, are willing to drink the water of immortality, if they may live in sin; but in order to live to God, a man must be made willing, for we are assured, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters." Here is an invitation to come and receive gospel blessings, without money and without price: yet this thirst is never felt while worldly objects can afford supreme satisfaction.—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Whosoever comes is sure of a hearty welcome; but to come to Christ, supposes that the need of his favour is felt, and that he is the Object of real desire: these feelings are not found in the heart before conversion. Coming to Christ and believing in him are, in fact, the same thing. The truth is, Christ demands no qualification in those who approach him but a disposition to receive what he is most willing to impart. Some think they have this always, and that they only omit to receive the blessings of salvation, because they are too much engaged in other pursuits; but this is an awful deception. No man will ever be willing to receive Christ and his yoke till the Almighty "work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure." We are exactly in the case of the man at the pool of Bethesda: we must not only be carried to the pool, but be helped down into it, or the healing angel will descend in vain.

SEPTEMBER 4.

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

The Apostle Paul had the strongest persuasion, that all his success as a preacher depended upon the Divine blessing, that human eloquence was a poor weapon whereby to convert a soul; and that a scheme of doctrine pleasing to Jewish or Grecian pride, though it might attract many admirers, would never become the power of God to salvation. On this subject, he was not at all moved by human opinion:—“We preach Christ crucified,—to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” He knew that this was a subject upon which unconverted men were wholly incompetent to decide; that this incapacity arose out of their spiritual darkness, the contrariety and sensuality of their temper, and from the doctrine itself being so mortifying to the pride and selfishness of man. Without inquiring, therefore, what would please, his only anxiety was to preach that which was the appointed means of salvation, and which would produce faith in Christ the Redeemer. It becomes all the preachers of the word to follow his example,—to preach Christ, Christ the crucified, the wisdom and the power of God. This will appear necessary, if we consider, that it is this doctrine of the atonement which shows men their desperate condition as sinners, that in Christ crucified we have the clearest developement of the Divine character and government, as well as the most encouraging display of the mercy of God to sinners, and the sure foundation laid in Sion for our hope of pardon and justification. This also is the grand stimulus to the love of God and man, to crucifixion to the world, and to universal obedience. The cross of Christ is a strong attractive to a broken-hearted sinner. While he meditates on the crucifixion, the burden of guilt is removed, his hard heart is melted, sorrow for sin is

excited, his hope in God is strengthened, his zeal for Christ is inflamed, and his love to all the redeemed and to the whole human race, is enlarged.

Come, fellow-christian, let us go to Calvary,—there our hearts cannot be cold, there the world will lose its charms, sin will be imbittered, pride will be mortified, the clouds of doubt and fear will be dispersed, the waters of comfort will flow to us as from the smitten rock, death will lose its sting, and the grave its victory.

SEPTEMBER 5.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, ii.

The state of a Christian steadily aiming at a high degree of conformity to God, is the most happy, the most elevated, that can be imagined. What solid peace, what rich consolation, what cheering prospects, what superiority to earth and sin, mixed with godlike compassion for the ignorant and those who are out of the way! But amidst a large body of professing Christians, how few are there who have ever attained, or made much effort to attain, this state of christian blessedness! They keep up the forms of religion; but, as it respects the state of genuine piety in their minds, how lamentably deficient! How suitable to such persons the words of the apostle,—“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it!”

But there are believers who, having attained this higher state of christian perfection, have fallen. From what peace in believing, from what joy in God, from what hope and confidence in Christ, from what consolations of the Spirit, have they fallen! Well might the Lord Jesus say,—“Remember *whence* thou art fallen.”

If I have backslidden, let me examine into the causes of this unhappy declension. May I not attribute it to the want of christian watchfulness, or to worldly cares or connexions, or to the indulgence of some easily besetting sin? I may surely say, that my present backwardness to duty, and want of spirituality, may be dated from remissness in closet duties. It is here that I first failed; since that melancholy day, I have been sinking lower and lower; and know not how far I shall fall. I remember how it was with me in months past; when I read the promises, and found them "exceedingly great and precious;" when the very name of Jesus was music to my ear; and when every sight of a devoted Christian filled me with pleasure. But how is the fine gold become dim! "Ichabod, the glory is departed." O Lord, fill me with godly sorrow, enable me to repent, and do my first works, that I may again "flourish in the courts of the Lord."

SEPTEMBER 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—Philippians, i.
1—23.

If sundry expressions in the apostolic writings are to be considered as a real criterion of the state to which all Christians are expected to aspire, what are we to think of the state of religion in the hearts of many Christian professors? As it respects contempt of the world, how far do they remain below the primitive standard! "We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." Respecting heavenly affections, it is said,—*"Our conversation is in heaven:"* respecting support and comfort under afflictions,—*"These our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* "We glory in tribu-

lation." "We are confident, I say, and willing to depart." The apostle in this chapter appears to have no fears concerning his acceptance with God; the only point of hesitation with him is merely this, whether he ought to be reconciled to absence from heaven for a while longer or not.

What do men seek in this state? Is it wealth? There a kingdom awaits every true believer, a kingdom which passes not away. Is it the love of pleasure which detains us?" "At his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Do earthly connexions bind us? There we go to "our God," to our Father's house. To Jesus our more than friend, more than brother; to all the wise, to all the good. We are here in a state of infancy; there we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. Here we groan under various burdens; there we shall walk in glorious liberty. We are here surrounded with the objects of misery; there we shall see no vestige of the curse. Here we are in darkness; there the presence of the Lord God and of the Lamb makes their day. Here our peace is broken, and we continually suffer from our own weakness and proneness to evil, or from the depravity of others; but there the society is perfect, and there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. Here we are terrified by the apprehensions of death; but there shall be no more death:—"I give unto them eternal life."

Why then are we so unwilling to die? Do our earthly affections cling to certain dear objects, and make us unwilling? Or is there guilt in the conscience? Or is it the want of heavenly affections? What a dignified character is a Christian who fully exemplifies that name! How superior to the objects of sense, while he thus desires to depart! What a substance his faith gives to heavenly realities!

SEPTEMBER 7.

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

It is a mercy, that the greater part of the wickedness perpetrated in the world is hidden from us. Many crimes are so foul and diabolical, that the mind is filled with horror at their recital; and if we felt only equal horror at crimes as committed against God as we do at many on account of their tragical operation upon the comforts and the lives of men, we should become thoroughly disgusted with a world "lying in wickedness." What then must the world appear to that God who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:" the holy God, the Lawgiver; to him who sees it all at the same moment, and every crime committed from the beginning to the end of the world at once!

Sin is described in scripture by various appellations, such as "iniquity," "transgression," "wickedness," and "ungodliness;" but it displays itself principally in a monstrous antipathy to that which forms the highest excellency of religion, its spirituality, and in the frightful death of every motion of the mind towards God and his service. This is the state in which the whole world lies. Sin has produced a complete prostration of soul, and has deprived it of all spiritual strength; so that the man lies a willing and helpless captive exposed to the ruinous power of all his enemies: and thus men are carried down by the course or current of this world; they are in the bondage of corruption, and are led captive by the tempter at his will. We sometimes say of land,—It lies waste, or of an individual, He lies at the mercy of his enemies, or under the sentence of condemnation: such is the case of all the unconverted.

This is the Bible account of the state of man: his future destiny is, to be saved with an everlasting

salvation, or to reap a fearful harvest of sorrow, according to the seed which he has sown.

The cause of this ruin is the unnatural and foul rebellion of man, which must end fatally to him. Can we arrest the lightning, and stop the thunder? What, then, shall we do, when we shall have to contend with real vengeance, and stand as the marks for the flaming thunderbolts of the Lord of Hosts? God forbid that we should neglect the overtures of mercy, that we should dare to venture on in our provocations.

SEPTEMBER 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—Revelation, vi.

When we see a company of pagans dancing before an idol, and glorying in their shame; we are ready to adopt our Lord's Prayer,—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” But, when we see a person who professes to believe the Bible, living contrarily to all its hopes, promises, and threatenings; we are reminded of the language of the apostle,—“What then! Are we better than they? No, in no wise.”—The day of judgment is here called “the day of God's wrath;” it will appear to be so, if we consider the number of the criminals, angels and men, who are to be punished; the Person inflicting the punishment, the insulted Lamb of God; the dreadful state of despair to which the criminals are driven, such despair, that the most horrid death imaginable is welcomed as a mercy compared with the appearance of the Judge, and the dreadful nature of their punishment;—“O ye mountains, fall on us, and hide us from him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the Great Day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

Let us suppose two good angels to descend from

heaven, after the saints are gone to glory, and the wicked are shut up in misery, and to sit on the still trembling ruins of the world, conversing upon all they had seen, and upon the ruins before them, would not their reflections take some such turn as the following:—How bitterly did those who had neglected their salvation, rue their folly, when they rose, and saw the Judge! How ashamed and confounded were those who had lived and died heroes in sin! How full of disappointment and anguish were the countenances of those who had trusted to the bare mercy of God, without repentance and faith in Christ! What shame and horror urged on those who insulted him, and nailed him to the tree! What anguish did the remembrance of their own imprecations bring upon them,—“His blood be upon us, and upon our children!” How full of rage did Satan and all his hosts appear, when they saw the triumphs of the second Adam, in the glory, the transcendent glory of the redeemed!

SEPTEMBER 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xlvii.

God created the universe, not that he might, like Nebuchadnezzar, make a show of it; (for where should he find another being, an equal, whose praise could be a valuable consideration to him?) but that he might be to dependent creatures all that which they might need from infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. There is a goodness in God, which urges him to do good to all his creatures; of this goodness the very wicked partake. But never till a gracious change take place in the mind, does the Almighty bestow the marks of his peculiar affection.

When Abraham was tried, and had actually raised

his hand to slay his son, then the Almighty appeared, so that Abraham called the name of the place, "Jehovah-jireh," that is, "The Lord will see or provide." When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, and had death before and behind them, then God recalled to their remembrance what he had done for Abraham. Elijah flees from his enemies into a place where there was no sustenance, and the Lord becomes his very present Help. Jonah calls unto God from "the depths of the ocean," and the Divine Being appears for his rescue. The example of the three Hebrews, of Daniel, of Peter in prison, of Paul when brought before Nero, and of many others, might be quoted; all which testify that God is a very present Help in trouble. But he may help his people in trouble, when he does not give them immediate deliverance: he is always near his people by his Holy Spirit, and by the gracious operations of his providence; but in affliction, by inward supports and consolations, by an unshaken fortitude, and by the satisfaction they feel that they are under Divine guidance, he gives them evident proofs of his presence. And how cheering to have a dear friend nigh us in trouble; especially if he be wise, and able to assist us! Such is God to all his people. He says by the Psalmist respecting the man who sets his love upon him,—*"I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him."* He affords help also in trouble, when he supplies patience under it, and when he sanctifies it to the sufferer's spiritual good. But he makes good these words of the Psalmist especially in the time of dissolution, when he enables the dying believer to say,—*"Thou art with me: thy sceptre protects, thy pastoral staff guides and supports me."*—*Horne.*

SEPTEMBER 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Philippians, iii.

The human body is so necessary to the soul in a world full of sensible objects, that it seems difficult to say how far the soul can do without a body. Yet there does not seem any deficiency in the enjoyments of heaven through the absence of the body.

In consequence of the introduction of sin, the body, by its subjection to weakness, to disease, to sensual propensities, and to corruption, has become a great hinderance to the mind,—“a vile body.” Yet such is the gospel, that, although its influences primarily regard the soul, it makes all things new; whithersoever sin has gone, thither the gospel goes, and applies the remedy. This vile body shall be changed: “it is sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body.” What a blessed companion to the soul will the body then be: free from sin, the senses serving the soul in its highest efforts, and the body in all things contributing its utmost share in the enjoyments of eternal life! The glorious humanity of Christ, the works of God in heaven, and the society of the saints, will give employment to the eyes; the voice of Christ, the conversation and songs of the glorified, will occupy the ears; the praise of God and of the Lamb will find ample work for the tongue; and the sweet commands of Christ will give blessed employment to the feet. Thus body and soul united will be happy companions throughout eternity; mutually contributing to the glory of the Redeemer, and to the happiness of each other. The saints shall then eminently glorify God with their bodies and spirits, which are his. Thus the whole man, the redeemed body, as well as soul, shall share in the blessings of redemption.

The consolation of this subject belongs only to those who have given up their bodies and souls to glorify God. Those who die under the power and guilt of sin, will rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

Then, if not before, the saints shall recognise their pious friends; and hold communion with a Saviour clothed in a body like their own.

SEPTEMBER 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, xlix.

However possible it may be, that the nearest and tenderest connexions may be broken through!—For mothers, or rather monsters, have been found, who have not only forgotten, but have destroyed, the sucking child,—yet God will never forget his people. He has loved them with an everlasting love: he delivered up his Son for their redemption, and put all their sins and sorrows upon him. He has called them: given his Spirit to teach, comfort, and preserve them to the end; and he has prepared for them an everlasting kingdom. After all this, can he forsake?—"I will never leave thee; I will never, never, never, forsake thee." He will make this promise good to them in the deepest afflictions. The promises on this subject are so numerous, that we have here the greatest proof possible of the Divine tenderness:—"I will be with him in trouble." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." He has fulfilled all this to his people in every age. What he was to Israel, that he is to all:—"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." But God does not forget his

people when they have to meet the last enemy: he knows their fears, their natural terrors, on the approach of death. If there be any guilt remaining on the conscience, he will give fresh assurances of forgiveness; and, when heart and flesh fail, he will lay his everlasting arms beneath the dying believer.

The backslider says, I can believe all this of the Almighty: but I have forsaken him, I have forgotten him. Yet hear, O backslider, he remembers thee still, and says,—“Return, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord.”

Take, then, the consolation, Christian: thine is an unchanging portion. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away; friends become estranged, or leave us, or die: Christ remains the same for ever. While the men of the world are weeping over the wreck of all their hopes, thou mayest say,—“This God is our God for ever and ever.”

SEPTEMBER 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, viii.
28—39.

The Christian affords in himself the most striking contrasts which are to be found on earth. Full of moral deformity, he is, notwithstanding, the righteousness of God in Christ;—though perfectly weak and helpless, he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him, and though he fall in death, he is even then more than conqueror through him that loved him.

There cannot be a greater appearance of subjugation than in the termination of the last conflict, and yet it is here that the Christian enjoys a complete victory. At this time he triumphs over even sin; for his spirit receives immediate emancipation, and becomes perfectly holy, and the body then loses

all its tempting powers, and goes into the purifying grave, whence it shall arise a glorious body like unto the glorified body of the Redeemer. Over Satan he then triumphs: that enemy, should he harrass him in his last moments, he shall thenceforward see no more for ever, except in chains at the judgment of the Great Day. The world was in a great measure a conquered enemy before, but the world retires from the solemnities of a death-bed. And though he dies, yet he conquers death also: the sting of death was sin; but the law, which gave sin its condemning power, is fulfilled, and all its curse removed. — “Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.”

But this conquest is through him that loved them. The Christian was once the chained and degraded captive of those enemies whom he is now enabled to conquer; but he would have remained still a willing slave to sin and Satan, if Christ had not freely loved him, and delivered him from the power of the enemy. And now it is the conquering banner of Christ which he carries. It is through the strength which Christ supplies, through the intercessions which he offers, through the faith and hope which he bestows. The strength and wisdom to fight, the weapons, the banner, the auxiliaries in this warfare, are all supplied by the Saviour.

The Christian not only conquers, but is more than conqueror: his is a conquest in which there is no loss, no reverse, no disgrace, and by which he gains a kingdom which endures for ever.

SEPTEMBER 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, vii.

1—25.

The example of the Apostle Paul proves, that where there is the greatest progress in holiness, there

is the deepest sense of sin; while a sinner living in a state of constant rebellion may not be the subject of the least uneasiness. In this way we account for the feelings of the apostle as expressed in this chapter:—"I am carnal, sold under sin." We are sure that the apostle was free from outward sin, and was a perfect man, according to his own definition of such a one, in Philippians, iii. 15. They were the motions of sin, its dying struggles, which thus disturbed his holy mind.

Too many judge of their state by their outward conduct: seeing nothing notoriously wrong, they conclude that all is well; but the apostle fixed his attention on sin, as working inwardly. This is the root of all evil; so obstinate and inveterate, that it is never removed out, except by the dissolution of the body. This makes it necessary that we should be made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

O glorious hour of full discharge! Blessed Jubilee! Soon shall this redeemed body and soul, if I am indeed thine, O blessed Saviour, break these fetters, and feel the joys, the vigour, and the unobstructed capacity, of eternal redemption, and full emancipation. Have I known the plague of my heart? If I have not, I am still ignorant of the worst features of my character; I cannot be humble, nor repent, nor value Christ, nor enter into the true nature of salvation.

SEPTEMBER 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, vii.

What is man?—Of whom shall we ask this question? If we ask the Hindoo sage, he will tell us, that man is God individuated; Deity clothed with a body. If we ask Buffon and others, they will tell us, that man is a higher species of monkey. But what does

the Divine Being say? He created him in his own holy image, a perfect immortal being, "a living soul." We must come then to the word of God, to ascertain this grand point, What is man?

If the question were, What *was* man? to decide it, we must go back to the commencement of the sacred volume, and to those other parts of Scripture which describe his primitive state. Thence we find, that man was a being of great intelligence, of perfect purity, and of perfect benevolence:—"Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

But the question is, What *is* man? What is he now in intelligence? Jeremiah says of idolaters,—*"They are altogether brutish and foolish."* This description the apostle applies to the whole fallen race;—"There is none that understands." What is man, at present, as it respects purity of mind? Is he not a slave to sense? Is not the whole world drowned in pride and sensuality? What is he in reference to benevolence? Is not man in all countries a wolf to man? What is the whole theory of trade and commerce? If you would know whether a man be benevolent, ask St. Bartholomew, examine the criminal codes of the most civilized nations, go to the coast of Africa, to the West Indies, to the seat of the Inquisition, to South America, to Smithfield. All these are within the bounds of civilized men; and the horrible crimes and butcheries which you see in these places are perpetrated by men who have risen far above the other parts of the earth in civilization. These higher orders of the human race do not eat human creatures: but in some parts man devours man: these only draw and quarter him, cut out his heart, and nail up his head and limbs in places of public resort.

Well then might Job ask, What is man, that God should set his heart upon him? But what is man,—redeemed, called, sanctified, and justified man? The Apostle John says,—*"Now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But,*

when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory: we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

SEPTEMBER 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, li.

If religion consisted merely in obedience to certain moral precepts, we should not find in the book in which it is revealed, petitions like those in this Psalm.

Indeed, the whole doctrine of scripture goes to prove, that the mind of man labours under an awful defection from God, and a propensity to that which he abhors. All good men have confessed this. The doctrine taught by the Psalmist intimates, that the heart is unclean and set on impure objects; yea, is so impure and abominable, that it must be created anew, a work of which God, the Creator of all things, is alone capable.

From these premises, then, it is clear, that, if we would secure future happiness, we must obtain a clean heart:—"Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God." This blessing is to be sought by prayer. It is the gift of the Almighty; and he gives it freely, as one of those covenant blessings which come to us through Christ Jesus. God permitted Pharoah to harden his own heart; and of Nebuchadnezzar he said,—“Let a beast's heart be given him.” To the Divine Being is also ascribed the rectification or renewal of the heart: hence it is said, The Lord opened the heart of Lydia; he is said also to incline the heart, to shine into the heart, to prepare the heart, to put good things into the heart, to soften the heart, to give a heart of flesh. By these and many other scripture expressions we are taught that God is the Author of that change of heart which is necessary to

salvation. He renews the heart by the silent and invisible operations of his Spirit, either with or without means. When means are used, he chooses afflictions, or something spoken, or read, or heard, or whatever other means appear to him best. And thus he lays a solid foundation for a change of character, for holy dispositions and conduct, and for the enjoyment of the pure pleasures of heaven.

How insufficient then will every profession be, which is not founded on a change of heart! How suitable the prayer of David,—“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

SEPTEMBER 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xvii.

There is a real distinction between true Christians and the world. Christ has taught us this truth;—“Ye are not of the world.” The Apostle Paul says,—“Come out from among them, and be ye separate;” and the Apostle John,—“Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So that we see our Redeemer has drawn a distinct and broad line between the world and the church. Woe to that professor who passes it.

We are sure that our Lord Jesus Christ, who came eating and drinking, who published no rules for ascetics, and who manifested the greatest openness and benevolence of character, would not have separated his followers from the rest of mankind, as the language just quoted shows that he has done, if he had not seen an absolute need for such separation.

The Psalmist here calls the unconverted by a

name which is not commonly found in scripture;—“Men of the world.” But this appellation is very significant and applicable. The rules of unconverted society exclude God and serious subjects: their whole conversation regards the present state; and their pleasures are inimical to the cultivation of the mind for the future world. Their interests are all here; and they partake of one common amalgamation with the things of this life.—“They speak of the world,” says the Apostle John; and the same apostle says,—“The friendship of this world is enmity with God;” that is, it is incompatible with a state of communion with him.

The portion of these persons is in this life: but it is described as a portion with wings to it; that is, it is a perishable portion; and the possessor himself must leave it. Unless prevented by a sovereign power, it always unfits for the heavenly inheritance.

Shall we then be content with such a portion as this? Shall an heir of immortality give up the blessed God, an interest in Christ, all the pleasures of religion, all the safety it brings, and all the prospects of eternal life, for such a portion as this, for a shadow, a dream?

How blessed the state of a true Christian!—Though his portion is not in this life, “he possesses all things.”

SEPTEMBER 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—Philippians, ii.
1—13.

In several places of scripture, such language as this is used respecting Christ;—“Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even

so must the Son of Man be lifted up ;” “ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth ; for I am God, and besides me there is none else ;” and the intention of the Holy Spirit in these representations, was, to hold up to us the nature of true faith, and the benefits of fixing that faith upon Jesus Christ.

It would, no doubt, be very profitable, to make the character of Christ a more frequent subject of our meditations ; especially let us behold him as the Lamb of God, enduring in Gethsemane and on the cross the most complicated sufferings ; offering himself up as a vicarious Sacrifice ; bearing our sins ; and thus making the Divine Justice our Friend.

See him rising from the dead ; it not being possible that after making satisfaction for sin he should be holden by death as a prisoner. He conquers death and the grave, and afterwards ascends to heaven, leading captivity captive, and, as a proof of the full acceptance of his work, sitting on the right hand of God, having overcome all his enemies !

As our Great High-Priest appearing for us in the holiest of all, let us hear him pleading the cause of his people, on the ground of his perfect sacrifice and glorious righteousness. There he waits till all his enemies be put beneath his feet ; till he have accomplished the regeneration of the world, and created all things new.

Contemplations like these may serve to create in us the highest admiration of his glories ; the strongest desires to be like him, and to be prepared to behold his glory for ever ; and the most fervent wishes to be useful in promoting on earth the great objects of his incarnation and sufferings, and of his intercessions and reign as Mediator and Redeemer in heaven.

O my soul, bring thyself to an incessant application to the study of Jesus, God in our nature. Here all human, all Divine virtues are united. Strive to comprehend with saints and angels as much as possible of

that love of Christ which passes knowledge, that thereby thou mayest at length be filled with all the fulness of God.

SEPTEMBER 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, iii.
25—36.

Most of the practical errors of the day are to be attributed to imperfect and incorrect ideas of the Divine Perfections. If we had any, even a distant view of the Divine wrath, it might suppress every other idea, and make us the subjects of a terror which might extinguish our reason. Yet the stream of God's wrath forms as regular a current as the stream of his mercy. It is only for us to be found in its course, that is, in the broad way; and whether we be the most exalted or the most depressed of mankind, whether it be a single victim or the victims be innumerable, it overwhelms them all.

All men by sin have made themselves the victims of this wrath;—"All have sinned." But blessed be God, what Christ has done in fulfilling the law, and atoning for sin, has removed every thing which prevented a holy and just God from saving sinners. Salvation by faith is as certain as destruction by sin. Mercy and pardon flow as freely through the channel of faith as wrath does through transgression. As long as a man is not a broken-hearted believer in Christ, wrath is coming on him to the uttermost; but the moment the satisfaction which Christ has made to the Divine justice becomes his by faith, then Christ says,—“He shall never perish.” Faith, then, is the great instrument by which salvation becomes ours; but wherever there is faith, there will be a contrite heart; and these two united will secure a holy life, and preparation for heaven.

But he that believeth not, shall not see life. As he enters not by the way in which life is communicated, he cannot see it. There are but two ways of gaining eternal life,—one by perfect obedience to the law,—and the other by faith in Christ. The law, being broken, cannot give life: if we had preserved our innocency, then the law would have adjudged us to life; but, as we have sinned, we are condemned. He then that believeth not the Son, cannot see life: the wrath of God abideth on him. Such is the deplorable condition in which all are found, who remain in unbelief.

What an important blessing then is true faith! O that this faith may be found in me; that I may share in the blessings which Christ imparts to all who come to him, to all who believe on his name!

SEPTEMBER 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, xxi.

The baneful influence of present things is in nothing more awfully manifest than in this,—it conceals from us the value of religion with all its inestimable blessings. This influence is also powerfully assisted by the natural estrangedness of the mind from spiritual objects. So that, at last, the question is,—“What profit shall we have, if we pray to God?” The ministers of the word, however, never find a subject more clearly revealed, nor more powerfully enforced from constant experience, than this, that religion is all gain, having the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

1. The young are in danger from the allurements of pleasure, having no experience to warn and guide them, and their passions being all open to its fascinations. Let us suppose that the fear of God, which

is only one of the influencing principles belonging to religion, takes possession of the heart, and we shall see this young man become afraid of entering the paths of vice:—"How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Under this principle, he becomes wary and cautious; he restrains his appetites; he begins to walk with the wise, and to choose those ways, books, and exercises, whereby this fear is strengthened. If we add the love of Christ, and the impressions produced by faith in eternal realities; a sacred energy will be called into action, and this will carry him beyond all the seductions of the passions and the calls of a thoughtless world. Here, then, this youth, who might have been licentious, extravagant, unchaste, a cause of anguish to his family, and a contagion to all the youth around him, is made sober, wise, diligent, and a blessing to all; he cultivates his own mind, and bends his attention to the improvement of the illiterate around him.—2. Again, religion, to the poor, is the highest good, since it produces hope in God, diligence, sobriety, frugality, cleanliness, order in the family, anxiety to give children useful learning, and to keep them under such a discipline as may make them, though poor, useful beings.—3. The rich are hereby made condescending to the poor, liberal, benevolent, and blessings by their examples as well as by their bounty.—The influence of religion on men in power, magistrates, masters, and parents, is most salutary; making them just, humane, disinterested, and upright.—5. Nor is its influence less benign, when it falls on children, servants, and every kind of dependents,—making them submissive, diligent, and upright.—6. Under troubles and disease, how great are the benefits religion brings, in giving resignation, fortitude, and the consolations of the gospel!—7. To a person under anxiety concerning a future state, how precious is religion, in the comforts which she affords, the pardons which she offers, and the prospects which she unfolds; and in death itself what supplies of spiritual support,

what balmy peace, and cheerful hope, does she afford!

These are some of the benefits which flow from a sincere dependence upon the grace and goodness of God, or from praying to him; for a more correct idea of real religion can hardly be formed by us, than that it is a deep and lasting impression of the immeasurable importance of the truths of the gospel, and fervency of spirit in seeking to be brought permanently under their influence. If the question be, What profit is there in prayer? It may be answered, Prayer promotes our dependence upon God, which is no common mercy; it increases our peace, joy, and confidence in him; it is the great means whereby all spiritual blessings descend to us. By it our evidences of interest in the blessings of the gospel are made more clear; and we are prepared for duties of every kind, even the most difficult. Prayer is like taking refreshment before a long journey, or putting on our armour before the battle: it insures the victory. Our Lord's example in his last sufferings is most important here: he went, and prayed three times.

He who lives without prayer, gives the strongest proof of his being destitute of real religious principle: he "forsakes his own mercies:" being "far from God, he will perish."

SEPTEMBER 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xiv.

The language of the wicked every where, in their refusal to acknowledge God in his temporal mercies, in rejecting his sabbaths, his worship, his written word, his servants, and appointments, is,—"No God." We want no God, nor any thing which shall remind us of him. How carefully do these persons

shut out of their parties, their conversations, their libraries, every thing that might remind them of the blessed God! Not only so; their occupations, connexions, and amusements, are designed principally to set up a happiness, not only unauthorised by the Almighty, but which may render them independent of the happiness which comes from above. Go into some houses; you will find nothing that can recal to the mind the idea that there is a God: his very name is carefully omitted, except as a by-word, or to fill up the end of a sentence. Every day is alike common; no worship, no song of praise, no voice of prayer. Search the heart; God is not in all their thoughts. Go into the library; he is not there. Listen to the family conversation; no God there.

How shall we account for this dead silence on so interesting, so pressing a subject? Wherein has God offended these creatures, or wearied them?—"Wherefore do the wicked condemn God?" Suppose a nobleman to take a stranger out of the street, to clothe him, feed him, remove from him the most loathsome diseases, give him the liberty of his whole palace, and, though kept in a state of dependence, promise never to abandon him. On the other hand, suppose this person to shun his presence, to keep a sullen silence on the subject of his favours before himself and others, to use his name on no occasion except to condemn it, and to do something, every hour, which manifests alienation of mind from his benefactor. Would not such behaviour excite general inquiry, and provoke the detestation of all who heard it? Yet this is far from expressing the baseness and turpitude of man.

Part of this is, no doubt, to be attributed to conscious guilt, and is an exact imitation of the conduct of Adam;—"I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." Guilt shuns the injured party, whose very name and voice become unwelcome. Sin has also given us a natural and strong antipathy to God:—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." But the

pursuits which we relish are prohibited by religion, and are incompatible with a due regard to it; therefore it is discarded. No one would be more unwelcome than Jesus Christ to the votaries of pleasure: were he to visit a party of this description, they would either precipitately retreat, or they would lay aside their play, and put themselves instantly into a posture of restraint. How long will men say,—“No God?” Our life is but a vapour. How long will it be before they call upon him, that he may save them?

SEPTEMBER 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, xxii.

How often do we hear regrets uttered respecting the disappointed hopes of the sons of pleasure: the burning of a theatre; the death of a celebrated tragedian, or a comic actor; some casualty or mournful visitation, which puts a person in weeds, and produces a pause in the pursuits of pleasure! How often is a neighbourhood, as a place of residence, rejected on account of its being destitute of gaiety and fashionable amusements! How true it is, that to some persons the indulgence of the bodily appetites, or of the passions, is the end of life! Thus we obtain our proof from involuntary, though not less decisive testimony, that this is the motto of the men of the world;—“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.”

Conduct like this our Lord has marked as the most consummate folly; Luke, xii. This person, after, the acquisition of a competent fortune, said to himself, I will now sit down, and enjoy it:—“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” What is there in all

this but what passes current among nominal Christians every where? How many thousands, without the least thought of eternity, are sighing because they cannot sit down at the close of life to the enjoyment of a competency! And yet Jesus Christ calls this man, for the very same reason, a fool. Nor does it require much knowledge of the christian religion to discover that such a person is guilty of the wildest folly; since he rejects religion as a system of happiness, and contents himself with the gratifications of the brute;—"Let us eat, and drink; life is short, and at death we shall cease to exist." An irrational creature may have a sort of pleasure in browsing in the field; but is rational and immortal man to put himself off with the husks of the swine? Called to the high relation of a person holding communion with God, and to the pure intellectual pleasures which arise out of religion;—will he thus consign himself to folly?

But it is more,—it is a heinous sin: it is a rejection of the Almighty:—"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord: for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Does not such a person, by resting in created objects, and by taking up his chief enjoyment in the indulgence of the senses, cast off God?

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Shall such language as this come from those called Christians? It is the very creed of the unbeliever. God has made heaven sure to all who seek it; but here it is thrown away upon a bubble; the heaven of an animal fed for slaughter. Is there any folly like this? That it is folly admitting of no apology, is often acknowledged in time of sickness. In these moments, the foreboding mind is afflicted with the deepest horror:—How was it, that God was not in all my thoughts, in all my plans? How could I so shamefully, so sottishly, abandon a Being so necessary to

my happiness? Who shall help me, who shall save me now? What are now those gratifications, those sparkling viands, those rich desserts? Where now are those everlasting friends? O fool that I was, not to realize the scene which I have now to enter upon! How piercing will be the thought of my folly through the slow revolving ages of never-ending duration: I lost my soul, my heaven, my God,—for what?—

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SEPTEMBER 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Romans, iii.

“There is no God:” few avow this; but if there be a God, where is his fear to be found in the hearts of men?—Millions allow the authority of the Bible; but who is there that reads it, studies it, and, like good Josiah, trembles at the word of the Lord?—

“The day of judgment will never come:” we perhaps never heard any one make such an assertion; but who is preparing to meet God? That awful fiery day is, however, fast approaching: then all these practical atheists and unbelievers will be confounded: then every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world will stand guilty before the Judge.

There are many circumstances in the cases of mankind, which will render them silent in judgment:—

Will not idolaters be speechless, when the Judge shall point out to them the impossibility that a weak created being should have been God,—that the turpitude of lying, fraud, incontinence, and murder, should have been unknown to them?

Will not he be speechless, who was favoured with a religious education, with pious friends, and with the faithful preaching of the word, from all which he turned with indifference, if not with contempt?

Will not a disclosure of the unreasonableness of sin, the daring attack made by it upon the Divine authority, and the injury it did to others, make men speechless?

Will not the reminding of men how often they were warned, internally and externally,—how often God waited to be gracious,—how much they were intreated to turn and live, render them speechless?

Will not aggravations of sin, such as met in Judas, and Simon Magus, make men speechless?

Does not every man sin against his own conscience, against better knowledge? Have not some men great difficulties within to struggle with, as well as in their connexions, before they can go on in sin with impunity? And will not these things render them speechless?

Will not the goodness of God, abused goodness,—the death of Christ,—the blood of the Lamb trampled on by the finally impenitent,—render men at that awful moment speechless?

The mouths of real Christians would be closed in silence, if the Lord imputed to them their iniquities. The reason why they will lift up their heads with joy, in the great day, cannot be better expressed than in these lines:—

“The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before thy throne;—
But faith can answer thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord hath done.”

SEPTEMBER 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Deuteronomy, xxviii.

Unbelief has been called, The great condemning sin; and it proves itself to be so, as it refuses credit to the threatenings, as well as to the promises of the Bible.

The curse, in its first operation, attaches to men in their civil capacity; — “*Cursed shalt thou be in the city.*” Who shall describe the sufferings of men, from oppression and misrule? Their most sacred actions, and their very thoughts are laid under interdiction: the property of millions, all their advancement towards civilization, their lives, liberty, families, and domestic happiness, are held or rather resigned at the pleasure of some capricious tyrant. What an immense portion of the human race are in this state of dreadful thralldom! Does not this present itself to us as the evident result of the universal curse following transgression?

The curse next falls on their property in the field, and in the store. This is seen in the excessive anxiety and care necessary to acquire it, in the various accidents and dilapidations to which it is exposed from the elements, from enemies on the seas, and on shore; but is most seen in the destruction of moral principle in acquiring and disposing of it.

The curse is extended to the sinner's family; — “the fruit of his body.” Happy the parents whose children are only blessings; but how many are there whose children bring their grey hair with sorrow to the grave! In the excessive labour and care required to rear a family, in the loss of one child, the licentiousness of another, the extravagance of a third, and the disgrace brought on the family by a fourth, the curse is evidently seen.

In all the various concerns of life the curse appears; — “When thou comest in, and when thou goest out.” “Man is born to trouble.” In the disappointments, faithlessness, treachery, frauds, in a thousand vexations, and in every connexion, how manifest is the curse!

But the curse is to follow the sinner till he be destroyed.

Upon whom are these curses to fall? Upon all who have sinned, and died in impenitence: — “Thou

shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left." All the Divine proceedings are distinguished by their greatness: as is his mercy, so is his anger. In the greatness of the very remedy which the Almighty has provided to take away the curse, the dreadful nature of the curse itself is seen. What then must this curse be, when it falls upon the worm man? And if the Governor of the world has begun to execute it already, will the last and most dreadful part be remitted? They only who are found in Him,—"who was made a Curse for us,"—will escape this curse.

SEPTEMBER 24.

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

The world seem to have decided, that there is something certain in present good, but that it is very doubtful whether Christians will enjoy the good of which they are in pursuit. But the apostle says,—“I know whom I have believed;” I am not led away by the hope of what will not be realized, but am going on sure grounds. —1. He knew that what was published concerning Christ, was fact, because he was the familiar acquaintance of those who had been with Christ from the beginning: he was not in the circumstances of those whom Christ blessed because they believed though they had not seen. —2. He knew that the Jewish types and prophecies were exactly fulfilled in Christ; and he therefore “confounded the Jews at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.” He was well read in the Old Testament Scriptures; and, when he wrote to Timothy, had enjoyed full leisure to compare them with actual circumstances. —3. He knew Christianity to be Divine, from his own remarkable conversion, about which he

could not be mistaken, especially after the astonishing change which had been produced in his temper and character.—4. He knew that Christ was the Author of this blessed change; he had received frequent communications from him in extraordinary revelations; and had, also, in the way common to the whole body of true believers, enjoyed the blessings of peace with God through Christ, and had joy and confidence in believing.

This knowledge of the Redeemer had induced the apostle to commit his eternal interests into his hands: he received Christ as his Advocate before the throne, and he trusted himself and his cause in his faithful hands; hence arose a Divine assurance, that Christ was able and willing to keep that which he had committed to him, against the great day.

On what elevated ground a Christian stands! He has the best enjoyment of present things; for these are sweetened by the thought that they are the tokens of Divine regard; and he does not tremble for the future. He dares plunge into eternity, knowing in whom he has believed, knowing something of his grace, of his faithfulness, and of his ability to keep that which has been committed unto him.

SEPTEMBER 25.

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

Whoever has with a serious mind reflected upon the history of the world, and the present state of things, will have observed, in the whole series of human events, a powerful enemy endeavouring to promote the dishonour of God and the destruction of man. By prevailing upon man to transgress, he involved the whole of the creation in a curse, and

spread deformity over that part of the creation which was before all beauty and utility. Delighting in mischief, and in the misery of every creature which God had made to be happy, he rejoiced in thus transforming the very elements and the first principles of matter into engines of destruction. But the greatest anxiety of Satan was, to ruin man,—the fairest of the works of the Almighty, and bearing in an especial manner his image. After the fall, he set up idolatry, which served the purposes of the destroyer exactly, as it most effectually dishonoured God, kept mankind in a state of gross ignorance, and led to the greatest degradation of the species. He soon drew the children of Israel away into idolatry, or into a very corrupt profession of the true religion. When our Lord came, he found scarcely a vestige of the religion of Abraham, or of the Old Testament, among the Jews. How soon Satan corrupted the gospel, is well known: turning it into an engine of worldly grandeur: incorporating with it the grossest heathen superstitions, and making it the tool of the oppressors of mankind. To strengthen this system, he united to it a great variety of austere orders, that the imposition might command a greater influence. He so completely took possession of the christian sanctuary, placing his own ministers there, that it resembled the temples of heathenism rather than the house of God, and exhibited atrocities which covered all the virtuous part of mankind with blushes. He next corrupted the system of education, that the youth might be trained to his service, and made this education perfectly heathenish. He has made the press, so powerful an auxiliary to the gospel, an effectual engine for the diffusion of blasphemy, infidelity, obscenity, and all those principles of deterioration and pollution which so effectually uphold his kingdom. We are to consider offensive war also as his engine, especially wars to promote religion. What a dreadful apparatus is here, from the smallest particle of gunpowder to red hot balls and Congreve rockets! The work of Christ was to save man's life;

the work of Satan is to destroy; and though the state of human society may make arms for defence necessary, yet it cannot be concealed that at the head of the war-system, as generally carried on, stands the "murderer from the beginning." We are also to consider Satan as inventing all the forms of amusement inimical to purity of mind; for by these he draws men to perdition. In short, whatever tends to corrupt and destroy men, must be considered as a part of that immense apparatus which he has formed for the ruin of the world. The Son of God was manifested to destroy this kingdom; and he will destroy it. Every convert to Christianity is translated from the kingdom of Satan, and becomes an offensive and defensive ally against the common enemy. Heathenism, Mahometanism, and the Papacy, are rapidly going to decay. A grand amelioration of the state of man is visible; the means for extending the kingdom of the Redeemer were never so great, nor in such powerful operation. Soon, soon it will be said,— "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

SEPTEMBER 26.

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

The service of the Jewish temple had much more of the gospel in it than a superficial inquiry might suggest: this will appear immediately, if we consider what are the peculiar characteristics of christian worship. — 1. The christian worshipper is supposed to be a penitent sinner, bringing his offering of praise and thanksgiving: such was the devout Jew. — 2. He also seeks God by prayer, depending for forgiveness

on the sacrifice and intercessions of another: so the devout Jew prayed in the outer court, while the priest in the inner court offered incense upon that altar which had been sprinkled with blood. — 3. The Christian worshipper praises God in reference to his perfections, his providence, and for the covenant and work of redemption: the Psalms are full of these subjects. — 4. The Christian hears the word read and expounded, and so did the Jew either in the temple or the synagogue “every sabbath-day.”

The glory of the Christian worship principally arises out of the exhibition of those blessings, and of those only, which the Jews had in a typical form. The Jewish priest went into the holy place with the blood of goats and calves, but Christ with his own blood, having obtained for mankind eternal redemption. While the sacrifices of the Jews remained only types, this sacrifice was divinely appointed to take away sin, and received a Divine sanction in the resurrection and glorification of the person who had been sacrificed.

Thus the Redeemer appears in the presence of God for us: —

“Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still.”

How sure then is the salvation of all those for whom Jesus Christ pleads! How certainly will that man be saved, who commits his soul into the hands of Christ! How important is prayer! How essential is faith! O Lord, may I be enabled to look unto Jesus as ever living to make intercession, and as founding his intercessions on the work which he has performed! — “I have fulfilled the law, made an end of its condemning power, and brought in everlasting righteousness, — deliver, then, this sinner from going down to the pit, since I have paid his ransom.”

SEPTEMBER 27.

Scripture selected for the day.—Mark, i. 1—15.

The description of the prophet seems to allude to the public entrance of a monarch into his kingdom, and is a command by a messenger to prepare his way before him, it applies to a rude country, where there are no public roads, and where the passage must be made through deserts, where vallies require to be filled up, eminences to be levelled, circuitous paths to be made straight, and uneven parts to be made smooth. John the Baptist was this messenger, sent to proclaim the coming of the Kings of kings, the God of the whole earth, and to urge, that the moral wilderness must be cleared before Christ could be enthroned in our hearts. But, as the inhabitants of a country through which a king had to pass would have been very culpable, if, instead of clearing and preparing his way, they had increased its difficulties, so shall we act, if we present obstructions to Christ when he comes to bless us,—“in turning away every one of us from his iniquities.”

When the Baptist announced the Saviour's approach, he did not recommend any national preparations, but exhorted the Jews to individual repentance, and to the removal of sinful obstructions. So, if we would properly hail and welcome the coming of Christ for our salvation, we must prepare him room in our hearts: there must be a highway made in this desert; these sinful obstructions to the entrance of serious thought and conviction for sin must be removed. Vallies must be elevated: grovelling notions of the religion of Christ, as though it consisted only in form and names, must be given up: our ideas of the perfections of God, of his law, of the whole economy of the gospel, as well as of the reign of piety in the heart, must be elevated. Mountains and hills must be made low: high thoughts of the moral

condition of man, of our personal integrity and religious merit, as well as pride of every kind, must be reduced, and a mind humble and self-denying implanted. Crooked places must be made straight: our prejudices against strict religion, our self-righteousness, enmity, and hypocrisy, must be removed; and honesty and simplicity of mind substituted in their place. The rough places must be made plain: our passions must be curbed, and access to our hearts be given to the Son of God. But who can bring his heart into this state of preparation? "The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord."

He who receives into his heart this Divine Guest, receives God and heaven, and unsullied blessedness. But Christ comes to reign,—yet he reigns to bless, to enrich, to improve, to lead to conquest and a crown. If Christ be not permitted to have his throne in the heart, pride, anger, malice, lust, covetousness, falsehood, and hypocrisy, will reign there, and these will reign unto death. Come, Lord, and make my mind thy holy and peaceful abode, irradiated by thy presence, and made glad by thee as the God of all consolation.

SEPTEMBER 28.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, i. 1—20.

The Divine Being treats his creatures as rational beings: he first teaches them by his works, by providential events, by his word, and by his servants; and shows that religion in its highest exercises, is our most rational service. But man, though possessed of reason, is, in every thing connected with his duty to the Almighty, more unreasonable than the creatures who are endued only with instinct, Isaiah, i. 3. The Divine Being appears, in the words falling under our

meditation, as a Father, who has a right to command, and power to punish, but who condescends to reason with his rebellious offspring. The subject of his expostulations, is, the evil of their doings.—“If I be a Father, where is my honour?” If you owe your existence, your support, your all to me, is this the return you make, to add sin to sin, to trample upon mine authority, and to dishonour my name? If I be your Sovereign, is your loyalty best displayed by rebellion? Where are your homage and attachment? —“All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people.” Thus, or in similar language, the Almighty reasons with men according to the light they possess. And lest they should say,—“There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices,” in the gospel he says, I have sent my Son to bear your sin, and to call you back to a sense of your duty: will you not hear him? Shall the voice of God’s eternal Son meet with no attention? Will not a sense of gratitude constrain you to return?

The sins of the person who attends to these expostulations, and is brought to faith and repentance, however aggravated, shall be washed away. All sin has in it a most dreadful turpitude, because committed against God, against a just and good law, against the highest obligations; but some sins are aggravated in a peculiar manner, they assume the most glaring colours. Yet no sins are so aggravated but to a penitent soul they shall be remitted; the mercy of God and the merits of Christ will blot them out. —“It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?”

Come, then, and let us listen to the expostulations of a condescending, pardoning God. He is not only stronger than we; but he has all the reason on his side.

If we hear not these expostulations, and the full offers of pardon, let us consider whose entreaties they are, which we refuse. Let us remember that sin is an

infinite evil, that we are dying creatures, and shall soon fall into the hands of this living God; and, finally, that the consequences of sin will be too dreadful for us to bear.

SEPTEMBER 29.

Scripture selected for the day.—Proverbs, xvi.

Men are in some measure aware of their state, when the life is materially wrong; but the greatest mistake is often made respecting the heart. The heart, they say, is good, though the life be irregular. The Divine judgment, however, is, that all outward actions are to be traced to the heart; and our Lord declares that all manner of evils come forth from the heart, and defile the man. This is the reason that the most powerful appeals to the understandings as well as to the feelings of men have so little effect. The heart is pre-occupied, and shut up against the invitations and the terrors of the Lord. But Solomon here says,—The Lord prepares the heart in man. David had said before him,—“Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart.” Agreeably to this, it is said,—“The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended to the things spoken of Paul.” And our Lord says,—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” The heart being thus opened, the man is found among the people prepared of the Lord.

In this preparation the heart is made soft or humble, so that it resembles the good ground, and brings forth abundant fruit. This is so important a work, that upon its accomplishment depends the whole of the christian character; for, being thus humbled, the person is prepared to call upon the name of the Lord, to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and to serve God in the beauty of holiness.

As the preparation of the heart is from the Lord, so is the answer of the tongue, or the answer of prayer.

Yet let us remember, that the Divine Being uses means to prepare our hearts,—his word, his Spirit, his ordinances, and his humbling providences. He is to be sought in the use of these means; nor should we neglect to bring our friends under the means, that they also may be prepared for his service and for his eternal kingdom.

SEPTEMBER 30.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xl.

Whether David refer here to the state of the unregenerate, or to a state of backsliding, the allusion is a very impressive one. To lie in a state of sin, or to be insnared into it by temptation after conversion, is to be inclosed in a horrible pit. What a tremendous gulph this is, will appear, if we consider how few comparatively escape out of it, and how many sink deeper and deeper in the miry clay, till they perish. A state of inordinate care, or of habitual intoxication, or of impurity, is to multitudes a dreadful gulph. Nothing but guilt and horror can a person expect, while he remains in it; and we generally see how ineffectual the struggles of most are, who make efforts to disentangle themselves from scandalous habits and infamous connexions,—resembling the struggles of a person sinking in miry clay. Such persons would, no doubt, be successful in their efforts, if they were to adopt the means which Jonah and the Psalmist used; —“Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me.” “I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry: he brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay.”

In the covenant of redemption provision is made for the deliverance of all who believe, from a state both of sin and of backsliding: but no man obtains this deliverance till he be convinced of its being a horrible pit; and till he cry for deliverance,—“Lord, save, or I perish.” There is no safety for a Christian but what is derived from faith in God,—in his promises, in his grace, in his faithfulness, and in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. “They that trust in the Lord,” says David, “shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” Exactly adhering to the same allusion, the Prophet Isaiah, and the Apostle Peter, quoting him, say,—“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”

The person delivered shows forth his gratitude, not by his lips merely, but in substantial acts of persevering obedience: he dreads the pit, and all the avenues which lead to it; and he never considers himself safe but as he feels his footing firm on the rock, nor happy but as he dwells under its shadow as the shadow of the Almighty.

Such deliverances, such conversions, excite fear in others; who suspect that they cannot be safe, while such a person has been found in such sinful courses, such a horrible pit. From the memorable instances of Divine goodness, others are encouraged to trust in the Lord for ever.

OCTOBER 1.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, i.

Every person pronounces that man wretched, who is without a friend, without a protector, and without a home. But let all human misery meet in one person, and compare his circumstances with those