

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

WORD OF GOD,

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

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OF SERAMPORE.

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REFLECTIONS,

&c.

JANUARY 1.

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

“ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—As a preservative in the midst of errors and persecutions, the apostle here exhorts Timothy to adhere closely to the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures, in the knowledge of which he had been educated. What a recommendation of these Divine records, that they are profitable to every varying circumstance in our chequered course,—that they make wise to salvation,—furnish the mind for all good works,—and perfect the man of God! It is well when we can say of a person, “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.” He is possessed of a real treasure, in whom the word of God “dwells richly.”

The advantages accruing to mankind from the knowledge of six or eight truths found in the New Testament, and which are not found in all the volumes which had ever been written before, and which must have for ever remained unknown unless thus revealed, are unspeakable.

It is indeed perfectly true, that what are called the great truths of natural religion, were so imperfectly known by the ancients, that they might be said, as far as any spiritual benefit was attained, not to have known them at all:—the knowledge of the Divine unity did not, in a single family, put down idolatry, either in Greece, in Rome, or in India. What the light possessed by the Greeks and Romans did for them we know, in a good measure, before we knew the Hindoos. But, living among this race of idolaters, we may be said to live at Athens; for the philosophical dogmas of both nations are the same. Go to Benares, and, as far as the modern Hindoos retain their resemblance to their ancient sages, you may there walk and converse with Pythagoras, and Plato, and Aristotle.

One would imagine, that the Almighty had permitted the Hindoos to exist as a separate people down to these last ages of the apostasy, that He might, by a striking and living contrast, between Christianity and Heathenism, confound the last efforts of infidelity; “magnify his word above all his name,” and show men how rich a treasure is contained in “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”

Am I anxious to form a just idea of the Being who laid the foundations of the earth, and upholdeth all things by the word of his power? In this blessed volume the Saviour showeth me “plainly of the Father;” here all his matchless perfections are made known, and he becomes the glorious Object of holy fear, of humble hope, and devout adoration. Am I, conscious that I have offended God, asking, with humble solicitude, how I may come before him, and whether there be forgiveness with him? Here I learn, that he is “slow to anger, plenteous in mercy;” and that our Advocate is gone into heaven itself with his own blood of atonement, appearing in the presence of God for us, even Jesus Christ the righteous. Do I ask respecting the dispositions with which I should approach God, and the nature of that worship

which he approves? Here I learn, that the Almighty requires not costly sacrifices, nor pompous ceremonies, but that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Painfully sensible of my own ignorance, weakness, and proneness to evil, am I anxious to know whether I may expect help from above, in my attempts to know, and serve, and enjoy God?—Here I am assured, that the great God, who condescends to call himself my heavenly Father, is ever ready to bestow the influences of the Holy Spirit upon those who seek him. Am I, oppressed with a variety of afflictions, asking, Is there no balm in Gilead,—no relief for the soul sinking under an accumulated weight of distress? Here I meet with gracious assurances, that God will "send the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, to abide with me for ever." Am I looking forward with painful forebodings to the hour of dissolution, and to the bar of my righteous Judge? Here I am supported by many exceedingly great and precious promises; that, when I "pass through the fire, I shall not be burnt, and through the waters, they shall not overwhelm me; and that whosoever believeth in Christ shall not be ashamed."

In this manner the Bible answers all my anxious inquiries; disperses the heavy gloom that hung over my existence; removes all my doubts; provides for all my wants; supports me under all present and expected evils; and satisfies the longings of my imprisoned spirit with the prospect of a happiness suited to its renovated nature, and eternal in its duration. Thus this blessed volume brings its evidence home to my heart, and gives me an inward confidence in its Divine credentials, greater than that which arises from the fulfilment of all its prophecies, from the exhibition of its most splendid miracles, and from all the glorious evidences by which it addresses itself to the understandings of mankind.

JANUARY 2.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, xl. 1—17.

How often in these prophecies is the church comforted with the assurances of the coming of the Messiah, and with the most striking and cheering descriptions of the blessings of his government! These contrasts between the perishing nature of man and the unchangeable nature of the word of the Lord, upon which the believer rests, how consoling! But the still more striking contrast between Jehovah and the idols of the heathen, in the twelfth and following verses, forms one of the finest portions of sacred imagery to be found in these inspired writings. What encouragement is here afforded to trust in the Lord, and to rejoice in his all-sufficiency!

Not one of the sacred writers ever goes into the proof of the Divine existence; and yet the writings of the heathen are full of this subject. Is not this striking difference between writings all claiming a Divine origin, deserving our serious notice? Should we not expect, that the Almighty would not offer proofs on such a subject, while it was very natural for these proofs to be offered by one man to another? One traveller, I recollect, has declared that he had found a nation who appeared to have no idea of a Supreme Being. However barbarous in other respects, and however obscure their notions on this subject, it is certain that the most uncultivated hordes have acknowledged that there is a God; respecting the above alleged expression, I confess I have my doubts: the evidence of a transient visitor of a people, with whose language he is unacquainted, should be received with great caution.

This general consent to the reality of the Divine existence, it is probable, is to be ascribed to some indelible impression left on all minds, as well as to

those deductions of reason which are level to the capacity of the most illiterate.

It is plain, then, that there is no such being as a speculative atheist: that there is a God, all nature testifies, all rational creatures acknowledge. But there are practical atheists in every country: and, if we are called upon not only to believe respecting God, that he is, but that he is also the Rewarder of those who diligently seek him; and to act up to this belief; how few, except real atheists, will there be found in the world! Every presumptuous sinner, in his actions, denies the omniscience, the justice, and the infinite power of God; and, as long as he neglects to seek forgiveness, he practically disowns the Divine mercy also. The language of his heart is, "No God;" and, for all influential purposes, to him there is no God: he is "without God."

If my belief in the Divine existence is to be ascertained by the devout intercourse I have with God, in my thoughts, my desires, and my closet exercises, does not too much of the character of a practical atheist belong to me? Let me examine myself on this important subject: if I know God, and believe in his existence aright, then I shall tremble at his wrath, I shall rejoice in his mercy, I shall be overcome by his condescension, I shall be drawn by his love, I shall confide in his faithfulness. May He grant that I may feel and walk "as seeing him who is invisible!"

JANUARY 3.

Scripture selected for the day.--2 Corinthians, xiii.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."--The apostle, at

this, the close of his epistolary correspondence with the church at Corinth, addresses its members with all the affectionate anxiety of a parent taking leave of his family. Nor does he spare them in these farewell exhortations; but threatens the disobedient with the exercise of those spiritual powers which he had received of the Lord Jesus. He exhorts them to self-examination; holding up to them this test of the reality of their religion, that Christ was in them, as "the Hope of glory," and was to be seen in their lives, or, they were reprobates. And, when he says to them, "Finally, brethren, farewell," he adds, "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

There is no doctrine of the Divine word respecting which there is more need that we should strictly confine ourselves to the very letter of scripture than this of the Trinity. That essential Deity is, in these inspired records, ascribed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is most certain; and that these three are invariably one, is also unquestionable. But no exposition of this doctrine has ever drawn aside the impenetrable veil, so as to make plain to us the mode of the Divine existence, as Three in One. And, by this divinely guarded and hallowed secrecy, connected with the distinct and undisguised annunciation of the Divine nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is not the Almighty saying to us, 'This is too great a mystery for you to understand. You cannot now penetrate these infinite and eternal depths. Be content, therefore, with what is revealed, and adhere exactly and closely to it?'

In the sacred scriptures this doctrine appears to be inseparably connected with the present economy of things, and particularly with the work of redemption, in which a distinct part is assigned to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

By thus strictly confining our ideas to the terms of scripture, even this mysterious doctrine, for all practical uses, becomes quite easy to the most unlettered christian. When such a christian calls upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, he approaches him as "God over all, blessed for ever," and therefore able to save; but, in thus approaching him, he does not separate him from the Father, or the Holy Spirit.

May I, then, while I carefully weigh every passage of the Divine word respecting this mysterious subject, content myself with what God has been graciously pleased to make known! And, thankful that he has so far unveiled his own existence, may I imitate those superior spirits who veil their faces with their wings when they approach the Divine presence, and worship him with reverence and godly fear!

JANUARY 4.

Scripture selected for the day.—Ephesians, iv.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."—The evidence of the Divine origin of the sacred volume, arising from the super-human nature of its precepts, is quite as convincing as the evidence connected with its miracles, prophecies, and the eternal prospects which it unfolds; and this chapter may be offered as a fine example of this evidence arising out of the precepts. The description given by the apostle of the offices and blessings bestowed by the Saviour on the church, as the fruit of his ascension, is most sublime, and full of consolation; with a view to this all-sufficient provision for the church, the apostle exhorts the Ephesian converts to every degree of christian obedience and

perfection. He presses upon them the cultivation of the most perfect union among each other as christians, by the consideration, that the whole church forms but one body, growing up "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" that there is but one Lord, but one faith, but one baptism, but one God and Father of all.

In the covenant of redemption, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is represented as giving up his Son for us. The conduct of Abraham, in not withholding "his son, his only son," from the Almighty, may have been designed as figurative of an infinitely greater act of love: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Christ then is the Gift of the Father, his "unspeakable Gift." He was given, or "delivered up, (as a victim,) for us all—delivered for our offences." As the highest possible number of finite beings must in worth remain infinitely below the Lord Jesus; in delivering up his Son for us, God has expressed a degree of compassion for man, which is and will for ever remain "unspeakable."

Has God then, O my soul, thus loved thee, so that he did not withhold his Son, his only begotten Son, from thee, but delivered him up to indescribable agonies and death for thy ransom? O what canst thou render to him for love like this?—Perhaps he may call thee to give up some Isaac; and canst thou refuse? He will assuredly call thee to part with every sin for his sake; and if thou art duly sensible of the magnitude of his love in this Gift, thou wilt most cheerfully present thy whole body and spirit as a sacrifice to him, holy and acceptable, which thou wilt feel to be a most reasonable service.

How deeply interesting does this portion of the christian doctrine appear! If by faith in Jesus Christ I receive these glad tidings of great joy,

I am permitted to consider all my concerns as under the Divine direction. The gospel not only allows me to look up to Jehovah as a placable Being, but unites me to that glorious Being in the most endeared relation. In all the storms of life, in all the perplexities of my mortal concerns, in all the temptations I meet with; yea, in all my afflictions, and in the dark valley of the shadow of death itself, it is the voice of my heavenly *Father* which I hear. He who directs the whole process of my probationary course, and presides over all the discipline which is to prepare me for eternity, is *my Father*.—While I adhere to him, therefore, I can never want comfort, or guidance, or security. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” While God is my Father, all things must work together for my good; yea, all things must be mine, whether things present, or things to come. “If sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

But how shall I know that I stand in this distinguished relation to the Almighty?—To the sons of God the filial disposition is given, which is called “the spirit of adoption;” so that this individual, to whom once the very thought of the Divine Being was unwelcome, now rejoices in this gracious relation, is overwhelmed at the condescension of the Father of the universe, and says, “I will go to God, my exceeding Joy.”—Another mark of our belonging to the family whose names are written in heaven, is thus laid down by the apostle;—“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And further it becomes the meat and drink of such a child, to do the will of his heavenly Parent.—O Lord, put me among thy children, and let me share even in the smallest of their mercies; and then I shall be blessed indeed.

JANUARY 5.

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

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him. He was in the world, and the world was made by him. The Word was made flesh, and pitched his tabernacle among us; and we beheld his glory.”—The whole of this chapter affords one continued illustration of the idea, that the doctrine of the Trinity has a special relation to the creation and the redemption of the world. Christ is here held up to us as God, as the Creator of all things, and as the Redeemer, taking away the sins of the world.” In the filial obedience and resignation of Isaac, when his father “bound him, and laid him upon the wood on the altar, and, stretching forth his hand, took the knife to slay him,” are we not reminded of the language of the prophet, when he says of the Messiah, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth?” In both cases it was the father sacrificing his son. While the inflexible justice of the Father awakens our deepest awe, the willingness of Christ may well excite our devout astonishment: he says, “I lay down my life of myself: no man taketh it from me.” But let us look at that to which he consented in this great transaction: the spotless and immaculate One, before whom the angelic world recite the anthem, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” consented to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh; to be made “sin for us, though he knew no sin;” to be bruised in the wine-press; to have the guilt, and shame, and punishment of our sins laid upon him; to bear his Father’s frown; to become the Victim of death and the grave: and yet,

“He gave his soul up to the stroke,
Without a murmur’ing word.”

But the government of the world is said to be given up into the hands of Christ as the Son. Hence our Lord’s words, “All power is given unto me in heaven and upon earth.” Power over all flesh is also confided to him, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. And what a consoling idea is this, that our Lord Jesus Christ presides over all human events, so as to accomplish finally the salvation of his church, the subjugation of all his enemies, and the moral renovation of the whole earth; that the direction and management of all the mean affairs of the humblest christian cottager are given into the hands of Him who gave his life a ransom for us! Into what other hands could we wish them to be given rather than into his “who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and who was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted?” Is it into his hands that we commit our spirits, knowing in whom we have believed; and shall we fear to commit to the same hands and to the same heart, our friends, our children, and all that we have?

But the Father hath likewise committed all judgment to the Son; and, as the Son of Man, he will come “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and all the holy angels with him.” It is on his arbitration that the final states of men depend; and from his voice, O my soul, thou art to hear the words of thy final destiny,—“Come,” or “Depart.”—What thrilling sensations will pervade the assembled world, when these sounds shall be uttered!—O for grace to resign my spirit into the hands of Christ, not only to be saved “in the day of the Lord Jesus,” but to be renewed and sanctified now! Then I shall never perish, nor shall any pluck me out of his hands; but the Judge of the universe himself will be my Friend.

JANUARY 6.

Scripture selected for the day.—John, xvi. 1—15.

“When he (the Comforter) is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. He will guide you into all truth. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”—In this chapter we have clearly set before us the work of the Divine Spirit in the economy of redemption;—it is, to convince the world of sin, and to teach, comfort, and purify the church. Hence he is called “the Spirit of Truth,” “the Comforter,” “the Holy Spirit;” and in this agency, the Spirit takes the work of the Blessed Redeemer, and opens and applies it to the mind of the subject of his influences. In fact, as the whole work by which human redemption was accomplished is ascribed to Christ, so repentance towards God, faith in the Lord Jesus, the sanctification of our natures, the power of perseverance, all the christian graces, and whatever goes to constitute what is called the work of grace in us, our fitness for heaven, are attributed to the Holy Spirit.

Am I then afraid that the good work of conversion has never been begun in me?—Let me apply to this Spirit of grace to work in me to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do I labour under distressing fears, that the blessings of pardon and peace do not belong to me?—O let me go to this Comforter, who as the Spirit of adoption will witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. Do I give way before the power of my spiritual adversaries?—Let me seek to Jesus to be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man. Am I cast down under a sense of my deficiencies and lukewarmness?—Let me apply to that living Fountain of influence, promised to all who believe, as a Well of water springing up into everlasting life. Do I feel

my incapacity to glorify God as I ought?—I will apply to this blessed Spirit, who is the Source of all gifts and all grace, and who can qualify me for every good word and work. Have I backslidden from God, and lost the joys of his salvation?—O that I may be enabled to seek for the Spirit of grace and supplication, that God may uphold me by his free Spirit. Do I walk in darkness, having no light, and am I in heaviness through manifold temptations?—I will seek the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, that I may walk in the light of his countenance. Do I want a heavenly frame of spirit, as the best preparative for the joys at God's right hand?—I will seek for those purifying influences, and that sacred assurance, which the Spirit of Christ alone can give.

 JANUARY 7.

Scripture selected for the day.—Deuteronomy, vi. 1-15.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children,—and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”—How often in the Old Testament do we recognise the watchful care of the Almighty over the interests of holiness! Again and again he addresses his people in words similar to the following; “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” This is very conspicuous in the chapter now before us; which also contains a remarkable declaration of the Divine will relative to the religious instruction of children. In the midst of his family, the Israelite was to be a man of God; conversing on Divine subjects, when sitting in his house, when walking with his family, when retiring to rest, and at the return of the

morning light. Yea, the lessons of wisdom, the recognition of their union to God, were to be written on the very posts of the house, and on the gates of the family mansion. Such were the provisions of this ancient and obscure economy on the important subject of family religion. Surely Christ did not dissolve these obligations.—Here too the principle is recognised, that parents should be truly spiritual, if they would hope to promote real piety in the minds of their children and dependents. Great is the loss of households, where the heads of families do not throughout the day maintain a heavenly conversation. An excellent writer says, “Being anxious to get wealth for children, is like building a wall to keep them out of heaven.” The personal religion of the Jews depended also very much on their freedom from idolatrous associations, and on their preserving of the knowledge of the One Living and True God.

A proneness to idolatry appears to have been the common sin of all the nations; and yet a wise observer cannot fail to perceive such a unity in the order of the universe, as affords the most solid proof of the doctrine, that there is only one First Cause of all things; and leaves the idolater without excuse. The Jews were instructed in this great truth with peculiar care: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;” and the first commandment is, “Thou shalt have none other gods before me.” There is nothing which militates against this in the doctrine of the Trinity; for in all our approaches to God, we consider Him as the undivided One. The mode of the Divine existence is strictly concealed from us; nor can we see that mere knowledge on this mysterious subject would be at all profitable to us. It is information and consolation enough, that, whether we approach God as our Father, our Redeemer, or our Sanctifier, we approach—not an attribute, but the true and living God. It is of infinite importance to us to know God in his nature or perfections; for in these we are deeply

interested, and the influence of this knowledge upon us is of the last consequence, even to the validity of our title to the christian character, and to our whole comfort in this state of trial and discipline: "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

And, oh, how thankful we ought to be, that we have not been left to worship gods of monstrous shape, and still more flagitious character, but that we are called to know him whom to know is life eternal! A poor heathen knows not which of the gods to address in the time of his calamity; confounded by their multitude, by their cabals, and clashing counsels. But the sincere christian puts his trust in a faithful Creator, knows in whom he has believed, and comes with filial confidence "to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help him in time of need."

JANUARY 8.

Scripture selected for the day.—1 Timothy, vi.

"The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who alone hath immortality, inhabiting inaccessible light, whom no man hath seen nor can see."—The common apology for idolatry is, that the human mind, especially the minds of the illiterate, cannot reach a spiritual being; that to fix the thoughts in worship, an image is necessary. Experience, however, in this as in all other cases, is the best guide. Take a congregation of pious protestants, composed even of the lowest orders of society, and compare the knowledge of God which these persons have attained with that of the same number of idolaters or papists in any part of the world, and the contrast will be observable in a moment. Here, then, we see the wisdom of God in so

carefully excluding every kind of image from Divine worship. Images are not necessary, and the introduction of them has done infinite harm in every age of the world. We speak here of idolatry, or image worship, in its most refined state; even then, the worshipper is often found to rest in the sight of the image, without any further inquiry into the nature and perfections of the living and true God. Idolatry in its grossest state is placed by the sacred writers among the most horrible crimes.

“God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Deeply impressed with the importance of this declaration, may I be anxious that in all my approaches to God, my inmost spirit may be engaged. O that the language of my lips may be the utterance of my desires, and that I may cultivate in these solemn moments the utmost sincerity and truth, since no disguise can hide the state of the heart from this most spiritual Being, whose very name is truth itself!

JANUARY 9.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, cxlvii.

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.”—Several of the names by which God has been pleased to make himself known to us in his word, as “the Almighty,” “the Lord of Hosts,” are evidently intended to fill us with hope in his all-sufficiency. In this condescending manner the Divine Being encourages his people to trust in him, and to say,

“I that am formed of feeble dust,
Make thine almighty arm my trust.”

The Christian too often magnifies the power of

his spiritual enemies beyond all due bounds: he has felt their malice, and he has an unlimited idea of the value of those blessings of which they endeavour to rob him. Added to this, he has the most humbling sense of his own weakness, unfaithfulness, and proneness to fall off to these enemies. To such a person how precious is the remembrance of those passages in which the Divine power is set forth as engaged on his behalf! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous flee and are safe." "The Lord is a very present Help in trouble." "My Father is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands."

But if I am found among the enemies of God, with what ease he can crush me! At his presence the mountains smoke, and the hills tremble. At one word of his almighty voice, the earth opens her mouth, and swallows up the populous city, or the pestilence turns it into an extensive sepulchre. Nay, he says to the whole race of mortals, "Return, ye children of men;" and one generation after another sinks into its original dust. O Lord, grant that I may be interested in thy favour, and so be enabled to contemplate the most awful manifestations of thy power, not only with holy reverence, but with all the tranquillity which this sentiment can inspire;—
 "This awful God is mine."

 JANUARY 10.

Scripture selected for the day.—Habakkuk, i.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."—This is said to be the language of one part of the inhabitants of heaven; and it is added, that these strains are there uttered by them without ceasing.

The infinite purity of God here celebrated, is that part of the Divine nature which is much enlarged upon in the scriptures; and is that in God, which, on account of our impurity, ought to awaken our deepest anxiety. We may well ask with solicitude, How shall I come and appear before this holy Lord God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: even the heavens are not clean in his sight; and he charges his angels with folly. How, then, should I be just with God? How shall I draw near to him, who have drunk down iniquity like water; whose very root and origin is sin, and who have committed so many daring acts of rebellion against him? I read, "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God:" but I find my heart full of concupiscence; and though I endeavour to restrain its evil tendencies, still it would be the deepest hypocrisy to deny their existence. O Lord, I might say with Peter, Depart from me, for I am sinful; but help me to draw near to thee, as one broken-hearted on account of sin, and longing to be clothed with the Redeemer's righteousness; then I shall find acceptance, and the remainder of my depravity thou wilt graciously remove, so that I shall, at length, through grace, appear before thee with all thy church, "without spot, and blameless."

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JANUARY 11.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xii.
14—29.

In this portion of the Divine word, the apostle enforces the necessity of diligence and watchfulness, by holding up the terrors felt by apostate Esau, by the awful display of the Divine purity at the giving of the law, by the rich provision for our perseverance in holiness found in the gospel, by the awful

sanctions connected with this dispensation of mercy, and by the approach of that tremendous day when not only Sinai and all the mountains, but heaven itself, shall be shaken. Nor does he stop here, but holds forth, as a still higher motive to perseverance, the everlasting rewards which shall be bestowed on the christian conqueror:—"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for *our God is a consuming fire.*"

By the justice of God, to which the apostle here alludes, is meant, a determination in the Almighty to punish transgressors according to those rules of righteousness which he has laid down to himself, in connexion with his love of holiness and hatred of sin. In this sense, God is, towards all those who are by their sins fitted to destruction, a consuming fire. His justice consumes all who are ripe for punishment, and moves in an undeviating progress in the awful work of destruction. Who shall escape, that puts himself in the way of this avenging attribute, this stream of devouring lava? In some parts of scripture, as an accommodation to our weakness, God is said to be angry; but this is to be understood rather as the operation of his justice than as denoting any thing like the passion of anger: his nature is infinitely perfect and blessed.

The whole race of mankind are lying as prisoners under his justice: they are swept away from age to age with unsparing severity. The old world, Sodom, and many other collective bodies, have been made the extraordinary victims of this justice. When the Father caused the iniquities of us all to meet on the head of Christ, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, Christ was then the Victim of the Divine justice, which said, "Awake, O sword, and smite the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord." What a marvellous sight! What an illustrious Victim! How awful must those sanctions of the law be, which

required so great a Sacrifice! Tremble, my soul, and hasten beyond the reach of this devouring fire. Embrace the Saviour, and take shelter in him before the gathering storm fall upon thee. O to win Christ, and be found in him! As every creature found out of the ark perished in the deluge, so at last every soul found out of Christ will be swept away by the overwhelming justice of God. How tremendous is this attribute,—deriving its sharpest terrors, and the eternity of its operations, from that infinite rectitude and fitness upon which the throne of the Almighty is immovably fixed!

JANUARY 12.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, ciii.

“The Lord is merciful and gracious: slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As for man, his days are as grass. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.”—All the perfections of Jehovah exist in him in exactly equal degrees; they are all equally dear to him, and are all infinite. And yet we find such expressions as these in the Divine word, “He delighteth in mercy;” “He is rich in mercy;” “He desireth not the death of the sinner.” No doubt, we are to understand these and similar passages as having immediate reference to the present period as the era of redemption; for, strictly speaking, when the time of vengeance comes, God is as much glorified in the displays of his justice as in those of his mercy. Many of our religious mistakes arise from the locality of our conceptions, and from our incapacity of raising these conceptions to that which is infinite and eternal.

But how delightful to us, as miserable criminals, is it to read, that God is *rich in mercy!*

“Mercy is welcome news indeed,
To those who guilty stand.”

Those who are sensible of their deserts, and tremble over the abyss of misery, to the very brink of which they have precipitated themselves, will thankfully celebrate this glorious theme: “O praise the Lord for his goodness, for his mercy endureth for ever.” “He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God.” Come, then, trembling sinner, come with all thy misery to him who is plenteous in mercy; for, according to the height of heaven, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far will he remove thy transgressions from thee. The mercy of Jehovah is from eternity and to eternity; from everlasting in its source, and to everlasting in its efficiency. But let not the greatness of this mercy encourage any to go on in sin, and to trust in promised repentance:—

“His mercy knows the appointed bounds,
And turns to vengeance there.”

JANUARY 13.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, iv.

“All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”—“Thou God seest me.” What a delightful idea to Daniel in the lion’s den! How appalling to the midnight sinner in the act of transgression! How encouraging was this thought to David, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; his ears are open to their

cry!" "He knoweth the way that I take." Passages like these prove, also, that the eyes of the righteous are upon the Lord, and that they wish to walk as constantly realizing the Divine presence. This makes them anxiously look to the state of their hearts, to the motives by which they are actuated, knowing, that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." To a person who properly realizes this idea, how light appears all human applause or censure! And how vain are all the fair disguises of the insincere professor! How amazing the folly to think of imposing upon him whose eyes, as a flame of fire, penetrate into the deepest recesses, and turn midnight into day! God sees at once all the myriads of crimes perpetrating in every part of the earth. What a scene to an infinitely holy God! And yet he is slow to anger, and yet his vengeance delays.

Well may I blush and tremble at the recollection that God has seen all my thoughts, all my ways; thoughts which I durst not utter, and ways the slightest remembrance of which fills me with anguish. And hast thou seen all this, O thou injured God; and canst thou, wilt thou, show mercy to one so vile? Canst thou say of such a one, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him?" Astonishing goodness! Wonderful mercy! Yet, when shall the time come when thou mayest say, not merely in reference to my justification, but also to my sanctification, 'I see no spot in thee.' "Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness."

JANUARY 14.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm cxxxix.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into

heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

—How surprising, that a people possessing such conceptions of God, should be capable of the least inclination to idolatry. But passion and opinion enslave all, except Israelites indeed: the worship of the heathen was connected with sensual allurements, and was sanctioned by the example of the most learned and the greatest nations on earth. He is highly privileged, who has been made willing to embrace a life even of solitude, if necessary, in order to enjoy the presence of God, and to "walk with him."

"Should fate command me to the farthest verge
Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the Atlantic Isles, 'tis nought to me;
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste, as in the city full;
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy."

Jehovah is every where present. If the knowledge of this truth had its due influence upon men, they would not dare to make criminal, riotous, and dishonest assignations: I shall have to meet God there, would be an effectual preservative. As men dare not perpetrate scandalous actions in the presence of a parent, or of a religious person, far less would they be capable of committing them, could they properly realize the truth, "Verily, God is in this place."

The true believer finds in this doctrine the purest

joy.—How welcome is the presence of a real friend in the hour of adversity, or in times of danger! To meet this disposition in the human mind, many promises of this description are scattered up and down in the sacred volume:—"I will be with him in trouble." With what courage the Psalmist speaks of meeting the heaviest afflictions, under the assurance that God will then be with him!—"Though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

JANUARY 15.

Scripture selected for the day.—Malachi, iii. 6.

"I am the Lord; I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." How often is almost every person whose life is preserved to any measure of maturity, reminded of the instability, as well as inefficiency, of human friendship! An eminent man is said to have declared, that he set not the least value upon a friendship that would not last through eternity. Perhaps he had been taught the bitterness of trusting in man, and had well learned that lesson, "Refrain from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" To meet this case, the Almighty says, "I the Lord change not:" my friendship is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God does forsake, but not utterly, the man that has given himself to Christ: he visits his backslidings

with a rod, but his loving-kindness he does not utterly withdraw, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. And canst thou, O my soul, be guilty of such baseness as to give colour to the charge, that, because God will not suffer thee to perish, therefore thou wilt put his long-suffering goodness to the utmost trial? God forbid! Such a resolution is scarcely compatible with a state of grace:—"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

O fellow-christian, be assured of this, the joy arising from this blessed truth can spring up in the heart only while it dreads Divine withdrawments. It is the friend of our bosom whose presence we are afraid of losing. To such a man, in such a watchful frame of mind, how consoling the truth, "I the Lord change not!" If I am but His, though my love may sometimes grow cold, and my backsliding heart may attempt to wander, yet his loving-kindness will not depart, his faithfulness will not fail. That I may enjoy all the consolation which the perfection of his nature will afford,

"Be thou, my heart, still near my God,
And thou, my God, be near my heart."

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JANUARY 16.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, cxlv.

"The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."—"God is Love;" that is, he is unmixed Goodness, or Benevolence. He delights to give existence and happiness to a boundless extent. He creates,

in order that he may bless. When he had formed this world full of creatures, of happy creatures, he rejoiced in the work of his hands; and this is what we are to understand by the words, "And God saw that it was good." Consider the millions upon millions of creatures that are nourished on this earth. Each drop of water contains thousands, and yet "the eyes of all" these are said to "wait on him, and he giveth them their meat in due season: his tender mercies are over all his works." These irrational creatures spend their hour, and then, in a moment, lose their frail joyous existence, to make way for the myriads which are to succeed them. Respecting man, the Almighty destined him to immortality in bliss. Nothing less than the gift of never-ending happiness would satisfy the benevolence of his Maker. And after man had withdrawn his allegiance, and had entered upon open rebellion against him, still "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Further, he made the terms of restoration to his favour, and to the inheritance of eternal life, so easy, that whosoever simply believes the message of reconciliation, is thereupon made an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. But who shall recount all his acts of goodness,—in our preservation while rebelling,—in our conversion,—in the gift of his Spirit,—in all our consolations,—in our supports under temptation and affliction; and, notwithstanding our rebellion, and our consequent subjection to the penalty of death, in his promise to be with us while we suffer the penalty, and that we shall be with him for ever in a state of unmingled bliss! In all this, how great is his goodness,—how marvellous his loving-kindness!

O that the goodness of God may melt my heart, and lead me to repentance! May I imitate him in the love of my enemies; and, like him, may I delight in making others happy!

JANUARY 17.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xvi.

“The Lord is the Portion of mine inheritance.”—Most of the Hindoo philosophers have dwelt particularly on the falschood, or deception, which there is in all material objects; hence the most marked contempt of every thing which engages the passions is with them the highest virtue. There is some truth, and some falsehood, in this doctrine; so far as material objects are perishable, and cannot satisfy the mind, so far they are, in a sense, false and delusive. But, while the Divine law commands the supreme affections to be placed on God, who is Reality, or the all-sufficient Good; it directs us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves, thereby confining the degree of our love to the value of the object.

When God said to Abraham, “I am thy exceeding great Reward,” no doubt, he meant, As the Almighty God, I am thy all-sufficient Portion, though thou ledest the life of a pilgrim, and art childless. And our Lord Jesus Christ, when he says, “I am the Truth,” teaches us the same thing. In God, as a Portion, there is a substance, a reality, a truth, which cannot deceive. He is the ever living Jehovah; he is not, therefore, a dying Portion. He is an unchanging God; and, therefore, not a changing Portion. He is an infinite Good; and, therefore, he cannot be an unsatisfying Portion. It is probable, that Moses has reference to the Divine all-sufficiency, when he so finely contrasts the eternity of God with the vanity of man:—“Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.”

May I have wisdom given me, to choose God for my Portion, and to proportion all my earthly

attachments to the value of the object, never forgetting, that,

“There’s nothing here deserves my joys;
There’s nothing like my God.”

JANUARY 18.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xxix.

Notwithstanding the lofty style of adoration exhibited in this and other psalms, the book which we call the Bible is more remarkable for its descriptions of the condescension of God than for those which relate to his majesty and glory.

Thus the names given to the Almighty, in his word, are not so likely to dazzle us as belonging to a Being of infinite power and majesty, as to encourage and console those who have made him their Refuge:—

Jehovah. When this name was made known to Moses, at the time he began to sink under the charge which God had committed to him, that of delivering Israel, and bringing them to Canaan, it was given him with the express view of making him strong in the Lord;—“Say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” The terms “Almighty,” and “the Lord of Hosts,” have been given in the same manner, to encourage men to trust in the Lord.

With the same view, he is called, *the Rock, a Fortress, a strong Tower.* In allusion to the comfort the weary traveller received in a country like Judea, as he sat in one of the recesses of a mountain; David says, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the *Most High*, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

The *Holy One* of Israel is another name given to

the Divine Being, and by which he seems to say to us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

In the passage where one of the most majestic titles is given to the Almighty, "*The High and Lofty One*," we see that this very title is used to "revive the spirit of the contrite."

The names *Father*, *God of hope*, *God of all consolation*, *God of peace*, and many others of the same description, speak for themselves. Here we learn, also, that every part of scripture, like every atom of nature, contains some sacred lessons, some striking impress of the Divine hand.

JANUARY 19.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, xix.

It appears plain, that the design of the Almighty in creation, was, to display his own glory, and to make myriads of beings happy. Man, the highest order of human creatures, was to find in the objects around him subjects for instruction, for praise, and for gratitude, capacitating him to glorify God with all his powers. In this psalm, the sacred poet conducts us into the temple of nature, and shows us the magnificent provision made for the instruction of every intelligent creature on earth at the same moment. "The heavens declare the glory of God,—the firmament sheweth his handy work,—day unto day uttereth speech,—night unto night sheweth knowledge,—there is no speech, no voice, but their sound goes throughout the earth."

We see not now the complete adaptation of creation to become the all-sufficient teacher of mankind, even had it been peopled by men with the moral and intellectual powers of Adam in his primitive dignity. But this is plain enough, that every part of nature, every tree, plant, flower, and fruit, every bird, beast,

and fish, the spacious river, the mighty ocean, the humble vale, the lofty Himalay, and the spangled heavens, with their thousand and ten thousand open and hidden wonders, were capable of furnishing ample employment, and matter for incessant praise, to creatures at once innocent, inquisitive, devout, and full of the vigour of a profound intelligence. Immortality on earth, in such a state, how great a boon! The elevated mind of Addison could catch a distant glimpse of the Divine intention in such a creation, and of the striking suitableness of the works of God to raise us to a sublime devotion:—

“The spacious firmament on high,
 With all the blue ethereal sky,
 And spangled heav’ns, a shining frame,
 Their Great Original proclaim:—
 Th’ unweari’d sun, from day to day,
 Does his Creator’s power display,
 And publishes to every land
 The work of an Almighty hand.
 Soon as the evening shades prevail,
 The moon takes up the wond’rous tale,
 And nightly to the list’ning earth
 Repeats the story of her birth:
 While all the stars that round her burn,
 And all the planets in their turn,
 Confirm the tidings as they roll,
 And spread the truth from pole to pole.
 What though in solemn silence all
 Move round the dark terrestrial ball!
 What though nor real voice, nor sound,
 Amid their radiant orbs be found,
 In reason’s ear they all rejoice,
 And utter forth a glorious voice,
 For ever singing as they shine,
 “The hand that made us is Divine.”

It is to be lamented, that devout and intelligent youth do not study more the works of God. The plan of redemption excepted, what study can be more interesting, and, to a pious mind, more profitable? The far greater part of the good men who have ever lived, have left this world without knowing the thousandth part of the wonders it contains. How astonishing, that man, after a lapse of nearly six

thousand years, has never, to this day, seen the extent of the field on which his hut is raised; that new countries, and new plants, are still discovered daily, and that the nature and habits of millions of creatures are still unknown! Much of this neglect of the works of God, is, no doubt, owing to a vicious education; but much also is attributable to the alienation of the mind from God, and to the miserable state of human society, the consequence of sin.

“ Man views it and admires, but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its Author! Unconcern'd who form'd
The paradise he sees; he finds it such,
And, such well pleas'd to find it, asks no more.”

But David, in this psalm, shows us, that in man's lapsed state, the Divine law is alone sufficient for his saving instruction:—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” As though he had said, at the close of his visit to the temple of nature, what the works of creation might have done, had man preserved the Divine life within him, that the written revelation does, notwithstanding the fall. And this testimony is confirmed by the apostle,—“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

JANUARY 20.

Scripture selected for the day.—Psalm, viii.

This psalm is also dedicated to a view of the works of the Almighty, contrasting the person of man with the magnificence of the heavenly bodies; it contains,

also, expressions of devout astonishment at the goodness of God towards man in placing him over all the works of his hands, and making him a little lower than the angels.

What is man? This is a question almost as important to the happiness of mankind as that so often urged among the ancients, *What is God?* For, although there is an infinite disproportion between the Divine and human natures, it is very certain that no person can attain to the saving knowledge of God, unless he previously know what is man: that is, unless he be truly humbled on account of his entire sinfulness, and, from this discovery of his need of the Divine mercy, seek the knowledge of God through the Redeemer.

It cannot be matter of wonder, that the heathen should not have known the true nature and destiny of man, when even we, who have "the light of life," are still ignorant of the most common principles necessarily connected with the nature and existence of the meanest insect.

Nor are the ideas of many of those who in this age have rejected the dignity and all-sufficiency of Divine revelation, much superior to those of the heathen on this subject. Indeed, when Divine revelation is rejected, to what certainty can any person attain respecting his own nature and existence? Such a one, looking around him on the visible creation, sees creatures of every form and size, with many powers equal to his own, fed like himself, and having habits very similar to his own. It is true, he perceives a superiority in some respects: his form is more erect, his features are more expressive, his frame is more delicate; he is capable of uttering sounds different from them, and has powers of thought and reflection of which they are destitute. But this knowledge of himself, and of his superiority to the other animals, leads him to no definite certainty relative to the great ends of his present existence, or to any future destiny. In the deepest gloom,

and under the heaviest anxiety to draw aside the veil that hides from him, the past, the present, and the future, we may suppose this bewildered mortal to address his prayers to the invisible Power whose existence he is constrained to admit, having no other means of accounting for his own existence:—‘O thou creative Power, invisible, and yet in thy works gloriously manifest! What am I? What is man? Why was I formed? And why all these creatures on the earth, in the air, and in the waters? Thou hast, no doubt, created all these for some purpose worthy of thy greatness: but what is this? I look every where, to the heavens above, to the earth beneath; but amidst all these myriads of creatures, none can tell me who is God my Maker; why was I formed; or, what is the end of my being.’

And yet this is the scepticism into which some, called the most enlightened of our race, would lead us. How true it is, that men “love darkness rather than light.”

But in the word of revelation we hear a gracious Creator answering the inquiries of the anxious immortal:—‘The world of creatures which thou beholdest around thee, I have given for thy use; they will assist thee to rise to the knowledge of the First Great Cause, Myself. Yet, while thou surveyest this large inheritance, remember, that “thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return.” And, finally, by the study of this sacred volume which I now put into thy hands, “prepare to meet thy God;” for, “after death cometh the judgment.”’

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JANUARY 21.

Scripture selected for the day.—Job, vii.

This chapter contains a most touching appeal to the Almighty from afflicted Job, lamenting over

the vanity and misery connected with human existence; and at length intreating forgiveness before he sleeps in the dust.

Man, in his fallen condition, resembles the ruins of a splendid palace, in which enough is left to show how dignified, how spacious, how delightful, a residence it once was. Respecting the original mental and spiritual condition of man, we can form only uncertain conjectures: but he must have possessed great personal dignity, capacious powers of judgment, sweet benignity of mind and aspect, and a soul ardently devoted to the contemplation, praise, and love of the First Cause. What he is now, let stews, taverns, jails, and fields of battle, tell. Sayest thou, This is a partial, overcharged, unjust picture? Ask thyself, if there be not within thee that, which, but for Divine goodness, would have carried thee to these reservoirs of corruption, these fields of slaughter.

The mind of man comprises the faculties called the conscience, the understanding, the imagination, the affections, the will, and the memory. The work of the conscience is to give notice of the approach of evil, to urge to the performance of that which is proper, to guard against evils, and to produce pain after the commission of evil. The understanding is the comprehending faculty, formed for the deepest researches: and joined to it is the imagination, capable of the highest flights of thought, and of soaring into the regions of fancy. The affections were given to unite the soul to whatever is desirable, and to set it in action in the pursuit of good. The will is the deciding faculty, and the memory was added, to enable the soul to fix in the mind present scenes and events, and to recal the past.—It is not difficult to conceive, that such a creature must have reflected the highest glory on his Creator, as being well formed to be the lord of this lower world.

The body is a convenient receptacle of this glorious inhabitant: well adapted to suit itself to all its wants,

and to assist in all its work of contemplation, praise, and research, and in the worship and service of the Creator.

Am I then thus constituted, and destined to such an elevated state of being? Lord, help me to fulfil thy gracious purposes in my creation, for without thee I can do nothing.

JANUARY 22.

Scripture selected for the day.—Genesis, iii. 9—19.

Some would persuade themselves that this account of the fall is an allegory; but these persons find it impossible to allegorize the words of the apostle, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.”

A test of faithfulness was given to Adam, and a more easy one could hardly have been given. Except one, all the products of the teeming earth were open to his enjoyment, so that there was no comparison between the pleasure to be expected from the forbidden fruit, and the threatened consequences of transgression. It was a most injurious sin, because it involved the misery, not only of the offender, but of his posterity to the end of time.

Adam in his fall lost not some of his spiritual strength, merely, but all. And from what elevation did he fall; into what unfathomable depths of depravity and misery did he sink! It has been asked, Could not God have prevented this catastrophe? Let us hear what Milton says:—

“I made him just and upright,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
Such I created all th’ ethereal powers
And spirits, both them who stood, and them who fell;
Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.”

Not free, what proof could they have given sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith, or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
 Not what they would? What praise could they receive,
 What pleasure I, from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason is also choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
 Made passive both, and serv'd necessity,
 Not me? They therefore, as to right belong'd,
 So were created, nor can justly accuse
 Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
 As if predestination over-rul'd
 Their will, dispos'd by absolute decree,
 Or high fore-knowledge. They themselves decreed
 Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
 Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown."

 JANUARY 23.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, xiii.

The apostle in this chapter enforces a variety of christian duties by the most urgent motives: he exhorts to *hospitality* to strangers, by the argument, that in these services some have entertained angels unawares; to *compassion*, by the recollection that we ourselves are still in the body; to *contentment*, by the Divine promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." After thus delivering and enforcing a number of precepts, he closes his epistle by most solemnly and affectionately commending the persons to whom it is addressed, to God:—"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work."

In pity to our weakness, we have the Divine methods of grace in redemption revealed to us under the idea of a covenant between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Hence the Father is said to have pitied the world, and to have sent his

Son. The Son is represented as coming from the Father to die for the world. While the Holy Spirit is spoken of as "the Promise of the Father;" and his descent is said to depend on the ascension of Christ:—"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Believers are said to have been given to Christ;—"All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me." "Thou hast given him (the Son) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. All mine are thine; and thine are mine." In these Divine arrangements, every part of the plan of redemption, and its full accomplishment, are secured, so that not a single subject of it, nor a single individual included in it, can be lost. "It is ordered in all things and sure."

The best proof of our interest herein, is, that we have, in a christian faith and life, taken this God to be our God, this Christ to be our Redeemer, and this Divine Spirit to be our Sanctifier and Comforter.

JANUARY 24.

Scripture selected for the day.—Isaiah, liii.

The goodness of God is peculiarly conspicuous in the early annunciation of a Saviour.—"The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The next person to whom the same event is announced, so far as we know, is Abraham:—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." These communications filled the evangetic strains of David and Isaiah; these were "the glad tidings" which kept alive the hope of all those who waited through so many ages for the consolation of Israel. Accounts of the birth, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ, were continually read in the synagogue; and Isaiah seemed to be a favourite book among the Jews: our Lord read part

of this book in the synagogue of Nazareth, and this it was which the Ethiopian was reading when Philip met with him. The Messiah was the same Saviour to all the pious Jews as he was to Zechariah and Simeon: the former hailed him as he who was to give the knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins, and to the latter he was the antidote of death.

JANUARY 25.

Scripture selected for the day.—Hebrews, ix. 1—14.

Among the different ordinances given to Israel by Moses in the mount, one respected the tabernacle, or place of worship, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat, where, says the Almighty, “I will meet with thee, and commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat.”

Now, although the ark and mercy-seat were not exposed to the daily view of the Israelites, yet, while worshipping in the outer court, they could not help thinking of the emblems beyond the veil; and to the mind of the divinely instructed Jew, they must have conveyed much of what we now call gospel light. In the ark was placed the covenant, and upon the ark the mercy-seat, before which the incense ascended, where God promised to meet Aaron, the representative of the children of Israel. The Jews then were hereby taught, that the Divine Being had entered into a covenant of mercy, through or upon which he could hold communion with them; and in their immediate addresses to Jehovah, they, no doubt, remembered this covenant of mercy, and were encouraged to come with confidence to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and grace to help them in time of need.

Thus the gospel was revealed to the Jews; that is,