

Evenings with Jesus

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Evenings with Jesus

EVENINGS WITH JESUS:

A SERIES OF

Devotional Readings

FOR

THE CLOSET AND THE FAMILY.

CAREFULLY PREPARED FROM NOTES OF SERMONS
PREACHED BY THE LATE

REV. WILLIAM JAY,

OF BATH

“TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON
JESUS CHRIST.”

I John i. 3.

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IN sending forth this Second Series of Devotional Readings, the compiler deems it necessary only to remark, that they have been prepared from the same sources, and will be found to be of a similar character and of like excellence, as the former volume, which has obtained a very extensive circulation and been honoured with general approving criticism from that portion of the press devoted to Christian literature.

January 1, 1857.

EVENINGS WITH JESUS.

Jan. 1.—*Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.* Ex. xiv. 15.

WE may consider this command three ways:—First, In reference to *the journey of the Israelites*. Now, to judge of this command, we have only to reflect upon the condition of the people; the army of Pharaoh was behind them, and the sea was immediately before them, and to go forward would be to advance into the sea itself; but we may observe that God's commands are so many intimations and assurances of success. "Go forward," saith God to Moses. Did he say, "What, Lord, and be drowned in the sea?" No; but they went forward, and the waters opened before them, and they passed through the sea as on dry ground. Now all this is very instructive and interesting. It teaches us to do all things in religion "without murmurings and disputings," and that nothing more becomes us than a childlike disposition, exercising implicit confidence in God, and unquestioning obedience to his *commands*. And this will apply to *declarations* as well as to commands. What he has revealed we are to believe on the authority of the Speaker. It will also apply to the *dispensations of divine providence*. When any of these seem to be at variance with our views, we are to remember that "all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth." Secondly, Let us consider this command in reference to *ourselves*, for if Christians, we are on our way from Egypt to Canaan, "seeking a better country, even a heavenly;" and it becomes us to be always advancing in "the way everlasting." Christians are therefore enjoined to "go forward." It is an awful thing when instead of this any go backward. The Ephesians went backward, and so were called to

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“repent” and do their “first works,” and to exemplify their “first love,” or lose the privileges with which they were indulged. Christian went back in order to find and fetch the roll which had dropped from his bosom while he slept in the arbour. Alas! how far many Christians have gone back and are ready to say—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?”

It is also a sad thing for Christians, instead of going forward to be only stationary. Let us then go forward, fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold on eternal life. Thirdly, Let us view this command in reference to the *progress of time*. Time is always advancing. The hour-glass, the day or week, the years all “go forward.” We are another year nearer now than at the beginning of the past year. Nearer where—what? Conscience, answer. But how are we to go forward? Let us take the following admonitions for our march—first, go forward with *humbleness of mind*; let us not go strutting into the new year as if we had been acting wisely, worthily, or meritoriously throughout the past year, but with penitent reflections upon the sins of our week-day, and of our Sabbath-day sins, so that we may gratefully acknowledge that “it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” And therefore, Secondly, With *gratitude in remembrance of his mercies*. They have been “new every morning.” What preserving, supplying, supporting, and satisfying mercies have we daily received. Thirdly, *Under a sense of present aid*; in opposition to our complainings and murmurings, distinguishing between our deserts and supplies. Fourthly, *With a firm confidence* as to what may befall us in the future. His promises more than meet all our circumstances, and provide for all contingencies of futurity, for we know who hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” and that as our day so shall our strength be. Fifthly, *With earnest and constant prayer*; neglecting prayer, our souls will be constantly exposed to danger, whereas if we abound in this, our souls will “prosper and be in health.” Let us then be coming daily to the “throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and grace to help us in every time of our need;” and, lastly, *with frequent thoughts of our journey’s end*. And it will have an end, and we are brought one year nearer to it. We may die this year

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If we are Christians, we may this year get rid of a wicked world without, and a wicked heart within, and be introduced to Him whom our souls love, and see him as he is, and be like him, and be with him forever, evermore.

Jan. 2.—*The Holy Scriptures*. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

THE Scriptures are a revelation from God, and are “able to make us wise unto salvation.” Let us therefore inquire what we owe to the Scriptures in a way of PRIVILEGE, and to do this let us view the advantages we derive from the Sacred Writings under seven aspects. First, As *inspired*; “for holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Wise men, indeed, differ a little as to the mode of this inspiration; but this does not affect the reality nor the nature of the communications. All we meet with is acknowledged to be of divine origin; and of this we have *internal* evidence in the purity, in the dignity, and in the consistency of its contents; and we have *external* evidences in the numberless miracles openly performed in the presence of enemies who would have gladly denied them if they could. We have prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled, and others which are fulfilling under our own eye. And here we have something upon which we may rely, for our Saviour says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Secondly, As *preserved*. What immense multitudes of books have perished in the lumber of the world! Yet this book has been exposed to innumerable dangers peculiar to itself, from the malice of devils and the wickedness of men. The ark is in safe keeping, and the “gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Thirdly, As *translated*. How much do we owe to the translation of the Scriptures! What would the Scriptures be to many in their original languages? only as a dark room filled with beautiful pictures, but none of them can be seen. They would be “a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” Now every man can read in his own language “the wonderful works of God.” Fourthly, As *printed*. A copy of the Scriptures transcribed would cost as much as a man’s labour during a lifetime. Now all may have a Bible either for a trifling sum or by donation. Now, while one copy of the Scriptures could be written by the pen, a million may be printed by the press. Fifthly, As *ex-*

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pounded. And how much we owe to many of those who have thus written! Calvin wrote as a commentator. It seems amazing that he should have succeeded so well, when we consider he had no one to follow. Yet he is seldom found to differ from those who followed him in the same course. "What a glorious work is Scott's!—perhaps for ministers, superior to any other. But oh, dear *Henry*, thou prince of all expositors, nothing can ever equal thy commentary for personal profit and pious use. Sixthly, As *preached*. We are far from undervaluing the reading of the Holy Scriptures; yet after all, generally speaking, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Nothing is capable of producing so much impression and effect as a living address from man to man. Lastly, Let us view the Scriptures as *experienced*. There are many who have the Scriptures in their houses, in their hands, and some of them in their mouths, but not in their hearts; but in others they are as "a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The gospel has come to them, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, and they have found these words to be "spirit and life."

Jan. 3.—*Let your conversation be without covetousness.*
 Heb. xiii. 5.

THE gospel is a system of benevolence. Every thing in the gospel shows the value of this principle. How it *enjoins* it! "As we have opportunity let us do good to all men." "Be not weary in well-doing." And in our present motto, "Let your conversation (that is, your habitual behaviour and course of action) be without covetousness." How it *commends* this principle! "Faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of these is charity." "Charity which is the bond of perfectness." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And saith the Apostle James, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy." Here let us refer to the scenes of the judgment of the last day. "Then shall the King say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But what had they done? Were they robbers of temples, murderers of fathers, or murderers of mothers? Were

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they blasphemers, that they are thus accursed? No. No, they were hard-hearted, covetous, and close-fisted. They are those whose eyes and hearts never bewailed suffering and misery. "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Forasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me." These, *these*, "THESE shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Nothing, therefore, can be so unbecoming the gospel, or so unworthy those who profess the gospel, as a selfish temper, as a grasping, sordid disposition; because persons of this disposition love in word only, and not in deed and in truth, and have not charity. They say, "go in peace; be ye warmed, and be ye filled." But it is all in vain, inasmuch as they give nothing to alleviate the miseries or satisfy the wants of these sufferers. They sow only for this world's ends. The man who seeth his brother in sin and suffering, who seeth him in want, and yet "shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Such men commonly give less—not only comparatively, but absolutely—much less than many of their poorer brethren. They give much less now than they did formerly. The good and the evil that men do live after them; and if shame and sorrow could enter heaven, how much would the covetous professor of the gospel have to suffer, if such persons do go to heaven, for which there seems no necessity, if they could look down and witness, and see the immediate result of their scrapings and their hoardings; whilst others, who have been constrained from love to Christ, and to do good to the souls and bodies of their fellow-creatures, will be able to look down and see how they are still making the widow's heart to sing for joy; how they are dropping the balm of comfort to those who are ready to perish; and how "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" they are bringing forth praise. The benevolence of the gospel has no limits; it is of necessity subject to no exclusiveness. But it has its preferences, and ought to "abound in all wisdom and prudence." Charity to the soul is the soul of charity. The greatest evil from which we can deliver a man is sin—for sin involves every evil—and the greatest blessing we can bestow upon a fellow-creature is godli-

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ness, because "godliness is profitable to all things," saith the apostle, "having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." While the tendency of the gospel is to minister relief to every kind of misery, its chief blessings are "spiritual blessings in heavenly places." What is the body compared to the soul? What is time compared to eternity?

Jan. 4.—*All things come of thee.* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

GOD is to be acknowledged as the Source of all our supplies. However abundant the streams, or varied the channels, with him is the "fountain of life." The silver and the gold are his; and whatever we possess, from him we have received it all. He it is that "giveth power to get wealth." And early prosperity lacketh its firmest support, its loveliest ornament, its sweetest relish, if there is not a full acknowledgment of the fact, that it is his blessing alone that "maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it." Is this acknowledgment constantly and heartily made by us? What should we think of an individual who, when relieved by a fellow-creature, and supported in affluence, whose necessities were not only attended to, but all his wishes anticipated; what should we think of such a dependant if he should never wait upon, or send to, his benefactor, never speak favourably of him to others, never think of him—but should take all the goodness shown to him as a matter of right rather than of kindness, and act as if he would have all around him to believe that it was of his own producing or purchasing? Could we expect the kindness shown to be continued? and must not his conduct appear hateful and abominable to every one who witnessed it? Yet, alas, how little God is owned by us! We are too prone to sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag. We ascribe, too frequently, our success to our own wisdom, to the power of our own arm, or to the interest we have in the favour of our fellow-mortals; or we act as though it were a matter of chance. God is not in all our thoughts. Continued enjoyment seems to give us a kind of prescription, and to induce self-reliance, and forgetfulness of God. In reference to the benefits so frequently and so constantly bestowed upon us, let us sanctify the Lord God in our hearts. Let us think of our duties, and compare our condition with that of others, and while we see that

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the "lines have fallen to us in pleasant places," and that "we have a goodly heritage," let us say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Jan. 5.—*Man is born unto trouble.* Job v. 7.

THUS we see there is an inheritance of grief, and to this patrimony all of Adam's kind are heirs. Its possession is as sure to all the seed, as the laws of nature are inviolable. Some portions of our appointed lot are less painful than others, but, under every aspect in which we may view our earthly condition, we find that every situation, more or less, exposes us to trouble and sorrow. Life is a warfare, and earth, at best, is a vale of tears. Solomon in all his glory was not exempt from its disappointments and griefs. He had sought pleasure in its most favoured spots and sunniest aspects. All that wealth could purchase, or that skill could devise, or power command, failed in procuring an immunity for him from trouble. After exhausting its envied resources, and studying its universal history, he thus records the result of his extended observation and personal experience:—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit." And who is there of the children of men that has purchased an exemption from trial and temptation, from danger and disease, from woe and want? On every hand we find foes that molest and oppose us; cares that corrode us; fears that dismay us; bereavements to grieve us; and disappointment to confound us. Yea, in our very comforts we find the elements of the bitterest grief; in our possessions the sources of greatest peril; in our successes the excitements of envy and detraction; in our affections the seeds of anxiety and anguish; and in our connections the pledges of apprehension and separation; and "every drop of honey hides a sting." As this is the common lot of all men, the apostle enjoins upon all sufferers, "not to think it strange concerning the fiery trials, as though some strange thing had happened unto them; knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren which are in the world." For "there hath no temptation," saith he, "taken you, but such as is common to man." Religion does not exempt us from suffering, but it prepares us for it, and shows itself most to advantage when all other re-

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sources fail us. While David said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," he also added, "but the Lord delivers him out of them all." And our Saviour says to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" but he also says, "In me ye shall have peace."

Jan. 6.—*Happy is the man whom God correcteth.* Job v. 17.

CHRISTIANS should be able to derive this confidence with regard to their afflictions. Although "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward," yet the believer is not only supported under his troubles, but he derives some of his choicest mercies from them through the sanctifying influence by which they are often accompanied. If a person has no outward troubles, his heart may be filled with inward bitterness, which is known only to himself. Well, but while the cup of affliction is going round from family to family, and individual to individual, while one is saying, "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed me;" and while another is saying, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness;" he may find these afflictions to be very salutary. They may be so sanctified to us as to subserve and promote the very purpose of our salvation; and they are much more likely to do so than our successes. The Christian's character is far more formed from his trials than his indulgences. "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation." How many can bear similar testimony to David as to the benefits of affliction!—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." How many have found in "the valley of Achor" a "door of hope;" having met God at first in the chamber of sickness. "Oh," says one, "if it had not been for these trials and bodily infirmities, I might have gone further from God. I might have lived according to the course of this world, and perished at last along with it." "Blessed," says David, "is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law." Nor did he speak from reason or faith only, but from experience. Luther says, "I never knew the meaning of the word till I was afflicted." "We fear," says Bishop Hall, "our best friends. For my part, I have learned more of God and myself in one week's extremity, than the prosperity of a whole life

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had taught me before.” If the vine had reason, it would be thankful for the sharpest cutting of the gardener’s knife; or if the fallow ground had reason, it would be thankful for the plough-share which tears it up, and is prepared by this process for the reception of the seed. Oh, to be able to say in our trouble, I know that these trials are “working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Oh, what to the believer are all the afflictions of the present time, compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them? What are all outward losses to those who can say, I “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”?

Jan. 7.—*Ye received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost.*
1 Thess. i. 6.

THE gospel is a system of consolation and comfort. Here it is worthy of our notice, that the very word gospel signifies good news—glad tidings—great joy; and with this name the truth well agrees. What is its principal and distinguishing theme? Is it a matter of mere curiosity—the solution of a problem—a scientific theory, in acquiring the knowledge of which, it is merely necessary to inform the judgment? It is not only “a faithful saying,” but “worthy of all acceptance.” If it be any thing it is every thing; if at all important it is all-important. It is a message to the heart, and a message that contains all that the poor, wretched heart of man requires in his woes, wounds, and weaknesses. It is an answer to the questions, “What must I do to be saved?” “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” It tells us how “he remembered us in our low estate;” that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace, and not of evil; “that he has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved;” that he has made peace by the blood of his cross; that he has wrought out and brought in everlasting righteousness, so that we may say, “Poor as I am, I shall attain unsearchable riches; and degraded as I am, I shall rise to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.” And how ought this gospel to be *received*? We know that when the Roman conqueror proclaimed the liberty of the Grecian States, the people for hours together filled the air with exclamations of

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delight. And shall we not receive joyfully the word which proclaims peace, and brings glad tidings of great joy, that publisheth salvation, that says unto Zion, Thy God reigneth? The dispensation of the gospel is characterized by the prophets as a mission of joy. We find them employing every image to express the joyfulness of the scene." They tell us that then "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; that the lame man shall leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." They call upon the whole material creation to rejoice, for the Lord is come. "Shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." If we pass from the language of prophecy to that of history, we shall find that in this manner the gospel was originally received. When Philip preached Christ in Samaria, "there was great joy" manifested. When Paul went among the Galatians, they "received him as an angel of God," and were ready to make every kind of sacrifice to such a messenger of mercy. And here the apostle states that the Thessalonians received the word "with joy of the Holy Ghost." And he describes the Philippians as "rejoicing in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in flesh." And the Apostle Peter thus addresses believers:—"Whom, having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Jan. 8.—*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.* Isa. lxvi. 13.

THE anxious, tender mother regards with affectionate solicitude all her children, but she is most concerned for the poor, weakly, sickly child. The knee, the bosom is for him, for him is the prepared delicacy, the noiseless room, and the breathless step, and the frequent watching and leaning over the bed of languishing, and the entreated reception of the offensive draught, accompanied with the sincere assurance—"Ah, my child, how gladly would I take it for thee!" And thus it is with the Lord's afflicted people. The Lord has assured to them, and provided for them, very special privileges. As their day, so their strength is. And as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, their consolation also abound-

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eth by Christ; and thousands can testify that they have had clearer discoveries, richer communications, and tenderer supports, under their most painful trials and afflictions, than they ever experienced in seasons of ease and prosperity. And what do we need more than this to soothe and comfort us? If the Lord be my portion, what can I want beside? "God," says the church, "is our refuge and strength; a very present help in time of trouble." No creature can be substituted for him, but he is more than a substitute for every creature, and his presence peoples, and fertilizes, and gladdens the gloomiest desert. "Behold," says God, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of old."

Jan. 9.—*Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.* Gal. ii. 4.

THIS includes a freedom from the bondage of corruption. What a number of tyrants does every sinner serve! What a tyrant is *Satan*! The "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," who "takes them captive at his will." He first seduces and then torments his victims. What a tyrant is the *world*! They who have faith overcome the world, but all others are overcome by it. We read of those who "walk according to the course of the world," as if they were perfectly at liberty, but they are rather drawn or dragged along in that course. They are always disappointed, and complaining, and murmuring, and always speaking against the world, while yet they suffer themselves to be deceived and tantalized by it. Their time is not their own—their will is not their own. They must do and say as others do—they cannot do as they would. What a tyrant is *Sin*! "He that committeth sin," says the apostle, "is the servant of sin;" and though, as Peter says, sinners may boast of their liberty and utter great swelling words, yet, says he, "While they promise to themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption, for of whom a man is overcome of the same is he brought into bondage." Is he free who is under the dominion of pride and revenge, and envy and malice? What wretch upon earth drudges like one of these with whom reason remonstrates and conscience condemns—who sees and approves

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better things, but follows worse? Oh, says the apostle, looking back to the days of his unregeneracy, Oh, says he, we were “some time foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures—living in malice and envy—hateful, and hating one another.” But after this the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared. And how did it appear?—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Grace never leaves its subjects as it finds them. It finds them slaves of Satan and of sin; but it says, “sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” “Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” “Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Why, these Christians are servants still! yes, but not slaves. They have a Master, and they obey him. Our Master, who is in heaven, requires nothing of us but what is reasonable and righteous. His work is “honourable and glorious.” He draws by “cords of love and with the bands of a man.” His yoke is easy, and his burden is light; and his “service is perfect freedom.” We are upholden by his free Spirit; and we can say with David, “We will walk at liberty, for we seek thy precepts.”

Jan. 10.—*I know that this shall turn to my salvation.*
Phil. i. 19.

WHILE the Bible enjoins us to be humble, and forbids every thing like rashness and presumption, it admits of confidence and assurance; and what a recommendation of religion this is! Nothing is so distressing as uncertainty with regard to any very valuable interest, such as the issue of a malady, or the title to an estate, or the success of an enterprise. In what wretchedness must a Christian be who possesses no confidence and certainty with regard to those “things which are unseen and eternal”! But this confidence is *attainable*. The Christian can gain this confidence and certainty with regard to four things:—First, With regard to *the doctrines* of the gospel. He may not only have faith unfeigned, but be “strong in faith.” Take a Christian who has been in the ways of God forty or fifty years: he

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would say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." With regard to many circumstantial things and minor points of doctrine in religion, we may leave the mind open to conviction; here we cannot exercise too much candour; but nothing can be more pernicious than to apply this to the leading truths of Christianity. "It is a good thing for the heart to be established with grace." Secondly, We may gain this confidence and certainty with regard to *the privileges* of the gospel. There is such a thing as enjoying the "comforts of the Holy Ghost,"—as "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,"—as relief under a distressed conscience by the application of the "blood of sprinkling." Thirdly, We may gain this confidence and certainty with regard to *our personal interest in all this*, and be able to say, "Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name." We do not affirm, indeed, that all the subjects of divine grace have this certainty, or we should "break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax." But if it were not attainable we should not have heard Job saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" nor David, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory;" nor John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Fourthly, We may gain this confidence and certainty with regard to the *end and issue of afflictive dispensations*. "I know that this shall turn to my salvation;" and this is the very spirit of the motto. Those know who are exercised thereby, that sanctified afflictions may be very useful and subserve the very purpose of their salvation. We allow that there is sometimes a difficulty in gaining this conviction. The providence of God is sometimes very mysterious. Job said, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him, on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him, he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." And Jacob said, "All these things are against me;" while at the same time they were subserving his real welfare. And we can gain this confidence, even now, being assured that though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, yet nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

Jan. 11.—*God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him.* Jas. ii. 5.

IN general the language of the Scriptures is most favourable to the needy and distressed; and what generous mind does not rejoice in this aspect of benevolent preference?—who does not read with pleasure?—“I will leave in the midst of thee a poor and an afflicted people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” “The poor have the gospel preached unto them.” And here that God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? But this is not true of them *universally and exclusively*; we are told that not “many” of the rich and the noble are called, but the very assertion proves there are some. But while the possession of earthly good may screen from dependence and embarrassment, and procure for them not only the necessaries but the conveniences, and indulgences, and embellishments of life, yet our Saviour said to his followers, “If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” Yet he also said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” The apostle, who taught that “through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom,” made no scruple to say, “Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.” Religion, by its natural influence, as well as by the blessing of an overruling Providence, tends in various ways to advance the temporal welfare of men. While it is said, “They that have riches shall hardly enter into the kingdom of God,” it is also said, “But with God all things are possible.” We allow there is enough to alarm the prosperous; but they have no ground for despair, for while there is a diversity in human conditions, and that some are rich and others are poor, and while some are in honour and others are in obscurity and disgrace, God hath placed no condition under sentence of reprobation. There is a way to heaven from all the diversities of human life; there is a passage to it from the mansion as well as from the cottage, though it is more narrow, and perplexing, and difficult. In a word, a Christian is never known by his condition, but he must be always known *in* it.

Jan. 12.—*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.* Ps. li. 13.

HERE we have the *importance* of the object sought, and the *means* by which it is to be accomplished. There is no evil from which a fellow-creature can be delivered compared to sin. The conversion of a sinner from the error of his way is an event of far greater importance than the conquest of a kingdom. There is no charity like charity to the soul. The conversion of sinners is not only important, but *possible*. The work is ascribed to God. He is indeed the efficient agent in every case; but he works by means, and it is by the instrumentality of his people that he principally carries on his cause in the world. They are his witnesses, they are his servants. He first makes them the subjects of his grace, and then employs them as means of communicating it to others. He changes rebels into friends, and then sends them on an errand of reconciliation, and by them beseeches sinners to be reconciled unto a God of mercy. And he has qualified them for this embassy; having “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” their own experience gives them earnestness and confidence in saying to their fellow-sinners around, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” There are many ways in which Christians may teach transgressors *God’s* way, and of converting sinners from the error of their *own* way. By conversation, a word spoken in season, how good it is; by epistolary correspondence, recommending good books; by bringing persons under the preaching of the word—for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” As soon as Andrew had become acquainted with the Saviour, “he findeth his own *brother* Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ; and he brought him to Jesus.” As soon as Philip knew the Lord, he findeth his friend Nathanael, and saith unto him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” As soon as the woman of Samaria had found him, and knew the Gift of God, “she left her water-pot and went into the city, and saith to her neighbours, Come, see a man that told me all things ever I did; is not this the Christ?” And we know that great numbers through her instrumentality were subsequently influenced by her statement, and induced to

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believe on the Saviour of the world. Thus it is with Christians still—knowing the misery of a state of alienation from God, and the blessedness of a return to him, their compassion to souls is moved and their zeal inflamed, so that, with Paul, their hearts' desire is that "they might be saved;" and, with David, they will be concerned to teach transgressors the ways of the Lord, and that sinners may be converted unto God.

Jan. 13.—*I give myself unto prayer.* Ps. cix. 4.

DAVID was a man of prayer. We here read of his giving himself unto prayer; that is, he made it the leading business of his life. Now in this he is an example worthy of our imitation, for prayer is the very life of religion, without which it cannot exist, much less prosper, therefore we should be found much in the exercise of it. For this purpose we may take three views of it. First, View it as a *duty*. Though God knows all things, and sees the end from the beginning, and works all things after the counsel of his own will, yet he hath said, "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;" thus they are commanded to "seek the Lord and his strength." Secondly, It is a *due acknowledgment of his nature, and our dependence upon him*, as our Benefactor, Preserver, and Governor, and "the God of our salvation, to whom belong the issues of life." Thirdly, We may view it as an *honour*. We should deem it an honour if we had free and full access to an earthly sovereign—and is it nothing that we can have access at all times to the "blessed and only Potentate, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords"? Prayer places us nearly upon a level with the glorified spirits above, with this difference—*they* approach the throne of *glory*, and *we* the throne of *grace*. We can enter the secret of his pavilion here, we can come even to his seat, can pour out our hearts before him with more freedom than we can to the dearest friend or nearest relative upon earth. Fourthly, Let us view it also as an *advantage*. "It is good for me," says David, "to draw near to God." What a relief does the very exercise of prayer afford! How it eases the aching heart, and binds up the broken spirit! Oh, there are times and seasons in which every refuge seems to fail us, and God is our only resource; when we look inward, and perceive nothing but

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decaying affections and withered hopes. We go forth, and there we meet with an unfeeling and repulsive world. The mind is thrown upon futurity, and there we find a vast ocean, where we are wearied with winds, and waves, and without a compass, without a chart. It is then devotion comes, and wraps us up in" its soft mantle, bearing us away to him in whom we may find an asylum into which no enemy can enter, and where no ill can approach. Thus we enjoy an emblem and earnest of that state "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Oh, the luxury of prayer! How relieving is it to pour our complaints into the bosom of a friend, who, having rejoiced with us when we rejoiced, does not suffer us to cry in vain, "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O ye my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." But how much more relieving and delightful is it to make God our Friend, and, like David, to pour out our hearts before him! And this is what he himself enjoins:—"Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee." He would not have us struggle and turmoil with it ourselves, but we are commanded to roll our burden on the Lord, for we can *roll* what we cannot *heave*. This is done by prayer, and each petition we offer takes off some of the load, and lays it upon him:—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The apostle also says, "Be careful for nothing;" but how is this to be accomplished? This is the way:—"Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." The heathens allowed that care was an evil, and they wished to cure it: but all their efforts reached only to the paroxysms of the complaint; they knew not God, and that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." But we can tell God all our complaints, and leave all with him; nothing will tranquillize the mind like this, but this will do it. He blesses us in the exercise of our various graces, and it is thus he prepares us for the manifestations of his love and the communications of his goodness.

Jan. 14.—*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty.*
Zeph. iii. 17.

HERE we have the divine sufficiency. This rises out of the relationship. A person, however, may be related to us, and he may even be with us, and yet not able to succour us. How

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often are we in conditions when, if the ear of friendship is not heavy that it cannot hear, the hand is shortened that it cannot save! But "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" says Abraham. "Once have I heard, this yea twice," says David, "that power belongeth unto God." Once there was no earth: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Once there was no sun: he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." And how is all this sustained? "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." Many frequently imagine that it is only the goodness of God they question, and not his power; for they say, Who can question this? But did not the Jews question it, and after all the wonders which he had shown them? Yea, they spake against God; they said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the water gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?" Yea, did not Moses himself question it? And Moses said, "The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month: shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall the fish of the sea be gathered together to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall not come to pass unto thee or not." And do not *we*, too, often question it? If not, why is it that we despond when difficulties multiply around us? He never knew what a difficulty meant, and never will. How is it that we begin to despond when means fail us? If he does not find a way he can always make a way for our escape. And, therefore, Christians may bring their faith to the comprehension, or rather to the apprehension, of his power. Let us call to mind the case of Abraham, who had received a promise from God, the execution of which involved in it natural difficulties, yea, natural impossibilities; but he "staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." The experience of Paul testifies to the same truth. "I am now," says he, in his address to Timothy, "a suffering man, and shall soon be a dead one. I have finished my course, and the time of my departure is at hand, and I do not expect to depart from a bed of quietness, but from the axe of the executioner." "Nevertheless I know whom

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I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." And, oh, let us remember he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." There is no corruption in us but he is able to subdue; no want but he is able to relieve; no desire but he is able to accomplish. He is able to make us "more than conquerors." He is able to "keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." And when our body drops into the grave, and returns to corruption, he can "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself." Praise we him therefore in the strains of the apostle:—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

Jan. 15.—*He hath heard my voice and my supplications.*

Ps. cxvi. 1.

WE see much in the history of David which tells us that he must have observed the answers of his prayers, and that he was wise enough to improve them. It is the richest traffic under heaven. "The merchandise thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof is better than fine gold." That God hears and answers the prayers of all his people is most manifest. This appears from the *promises*, which in this respect are exceedingly "great and precious." "Gall upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We may see it also in the *experience of God's people in all ages*. How many testimonies are there to the success of prayer! What did it for Abraham? for Joshua? for Hezekiah? What judgments has it not removed? What deliverances has it not accomplished? What blessings has it not obtained? And David observed the answers of his prayers. "He hath inclined his ear unto me, he hath heard my voice and my supplications." He was sure of this. Balaam has said, "Let me die the death of the righteous,

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and let my last end be like his," without ever regarding the way that led to the one, or the life which conduced to the other. And Pilate asked, "What is truth?" and never waited for an answer. This is much like some persons, who by the appearance of devotion draw forth the divine attention, when they are regardless of his benefits. They knock at the door, and do not wait to see if it be opened, or whether they are likely to succeed. Is not this a solemn mockery? Is it not taking God's name in vain? Is it not offering the sacrifice of fools? Can we ever imagine that God will regard those prayers that we do not regard ourselves, or watch for an answer to? God does not *always* answer prayer *immediately*. He does in some instances. In the case of Daniel and of Cornelius, their prayers were answered at the very time, and God has given us the promise, "It shall come to pass, that, before they call, I will answer, and, while they are yet speaking, I will hear." At other times he *delays*. He "waits that he may be gracious," and requires us to wait too. Every thing is beautiful in its season. "It is good for a man that he both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." "For he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him." We must not, therefore, fix a time, and say, if he does not come, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" for he never delays but in order to render his blessings more useful; to ripen the mercies he is waiting to bestow. We are like foolish, eager children, who would gather the fruit before the sun has given it its fine complexion, its rich relish, or its nutritious quality. But, says the Psalmist, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." We should also remember, that *there are various ways in which God answers prayer*. We are prone to prescribe to him, and think that he must come in such a direction; but, while we stand gazing there, he passes by another way. Sometimes he grants *the very blessings we pray for*. This was the case with the Psalmist. "Thou hast given," said the Psalmist, "to him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness; he asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him." Sometimes he answers by *an exchange of mercies*. Instead of temporal he bestows spiritual blessings. This was the case with Paul:—"He besought the Lord thrice, but his prayer was not answered by deliverance, but

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by support.” “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Sometimes God answers prayer by *distressing things, by severe afflictions and trials*; “by terrible things in righteousness.” The reason why we do not perceive the answers to our prayers, is our indifference or inattention, for David says, “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” Flavel says, “He that observes providences shall never want providences to observe.” Sometimes we are looking for something too surprising, and remarkable, and sensitive; not remembering that God does not go out of the common course of nature and providence. All hearts are open to him, all creatures are under his control, but we must use proper means, and, if we pray in faith, we may be sure that “praying breath shall not be spent in vain.”

Jan. 16.—*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

Luke x. 41, 42.

WE are here called upon to behold blemishes in character which we are to shun, excellencies we are to imitate, and advantages we are to acquire. Martha, who had mistaken our Lord's character and desires, and thinking nothing too good for our Lord and his disciples, had provided an entertainment which was not only unnecessary, but which engrossed all her time and attention, and thereby deprived herself of an opportunity to listen to our Saviour's discourse. In her anxiety to do all that she considered the occasion required, she was “troubled about many things, being cumbered with much serving.” While her sister Mary—all reverence, all attention, and all composure—was feeding on the doctrines of eternal life, sat at the Saviour's feet, thus wisely improving the opportunity given for the good of her soul, Martha rudely disturbed the devotions of the company, and interrupted our Lord's discourse, in her haste and heat loses her self-command; she condemns her sister as idle and indifferent, and asked the Lord to interfere, saying, “Bid my sister that she help me.” Jesus, instead of doing this, reproves her, while he applauded the conduct of Mary. However anxious we may be about many things, one thing alone is *really indispensable*, and demands our

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attention. It is hearing the Saviour's words; it is an attention to the soul; it is religion. Other things are comparatively insignificant, and less than nothing and vanity; this is all-important. Other things are accidentally needful; this is *essentially* so. Other things are occasionally needful; this is invariably so. Other things are partially needful; this is universally so. Needful for prosperity and adversity; needful for the body and the soul; needful for time and for eternity. Some things are needful for some individuals but not for others, but this is needful for all. Needful for kings and subjects; needful for rich and poor; needful for old and young. While the many seem to be prizing and pursuing every thing in preference to this, we find David and Paul reducing every concern into one. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "This is one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before." Observe, piety is a matter of *personal conviction* and *choice*. Thus, it is said, "Mary hath chosen that good part." Thus, David says, "I have chosen the way of truth." No man ever entered into heaven accidentally; no man was ever forced into it against his will. God makes us sensible of our need of salvation above every thing else, so that we desire it, we seek it, we pray for it, and then, when we obtain it, it makes us blest. It relieves our wants, fulfils our desires, and accomplishes our hopes. Observe, lastly, real godliness is not only a necessary but a *durable acquisition*. "Blary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." Permanency adds bliss to bliss: some things, are not worth preservation: but an invaluable treasure, a thing absolutely needful, will awaken all our concern, and we shall be anxious not only to possess it, but to retain it. The blessings we derive from godliness are ours forever, laid up where "moth and rust cannot corrupt. nor thieves break through and steal."

Jan. 17.—*He will save.* Zeph. iii. 17.

SAVE from what? This is not mentioned; this was not necessary. Save from penury—from the scourge of tongues—from bodily sickness—from family bereavements? Yes, if it be good

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for us. But there are cases which will require the sacrifice of these instead of their preservation. No; deliverance from temporal evil is not absolutely promised; it could not have been absolutely promised; if it had, it would have turned the promise into a threatening. Could we ourselves have wished God to promise temporal advantages, whether they should be good for us or whether they should be evil? Surely we could only have asked God to engage to give them if good for us, and to beg him to refuse if he foresaw they would be evil. This he has promised, and so far they are sure. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Christians will not be saved from death,—that is, from the stroke of death; but they will from the sting. They will not be saved from the grave,—that is, from entering it; but they will from continuing there. But we may observe that this salvation, though not exclusively, is principally, spiritual and eternal. "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." "They shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end." If guilty, then, this salvation shall justify us; if unholy, it shall renew us; if blind, it shall open our eyes, and make us wise unto salvation. If poor, it shall enrich us, and if destitute, it shall bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But are they not saved already? Does not the apostle say, "By grace *are ye saved*"—"He *hath* saved you, and called you with an holy calling"? Yes, assuredly they are saved already, because the whole of the salvation is insured, and the whole of the salvation is begun. But yet there is a great difference between the purchase and the application of salvation—between the commencement and the completion of it. But, it may be said, if persons are saved, can they be more than saved? Not as to their state, but as to their experience. Surely they may know more of the salvation, feel more of it, rejoice more in it, and communicate more of it to others. What! can a man be more justified than the believer is now before God? No, but then he may apprehend him more clearly and fully, and realize the privilege, and no longer write bitter things against himself, and, knowing that he is justified by faith, have peace with God and peace within—peace in the court of conscience, as well as in the court of heaven. Is not the Christian already sanctified? "Among whom are ye the sanctified?" says

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the Apostle Peter. But, though the work is begun, it is not perfected; it will be carried on against the day of Jesus Christ. Every thing here is progressive, whatever some may say to the contrary. There is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. There is the dawn and the shining unto perfect day. The righteous "hold on their way, and was stronger and stronger;" they are "renewed day by day," and are "changed from glory into glory." Hence the church prays, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us." And hence David pleads, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever; forsake not the work of thine own hands."

Jan. 18.—*He will rest in his love.* Zeph. iii. 17.

OBSERVE the permanency of Jehovah's love to his people. "He shall rest in his love;" that is, he shall feel fixed and changeless complacency and satisfaction. We do not always rest in our love, for love is often the offspring of ignorance and weakness—a mere impulse of passion; it often leaves no solace or contentment in the review; it is one of the things that are repented of; it varies with a thousand causes; it sometimes not only cools with indifference, but it terminates in the most perfect disgust and aversion. But with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. "I, the Lord, change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Is he a friend? He "loveth at all times." Is he a husband? "I will betroth thee unto me," not "until death us do part," but "I will betroth thee unto me forever." Is he a father? "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He will, indeed, correct them. This is dealing with them as with sons; for what son is he whom his father chasteneth not? But, though he chastens, he will not cast them off, he will not disinherit them; he will heal their backslidings and love them freely; and, when the rod has answered its purpose, it will fall from his hand upon the ground, and he will break forth and say, "Is Ephraim, my dear son, is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still." Men fail in their natural affection—and women, they sometimes fail in their natural affection. Yes, the mother sometimes forgets her sucking child, and

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has no compassion on the son of her womb. Yes, says God, who knows all things, this may be the case with her, but, nevertheless, "I will not forget thee." "Behold, I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

Jan. 19.—*Do good.* Heb. xiii. 16.

GOD not only bestows good upon his people for their own sakes, but blesses some for the sake of others. He looks beyond the immediate possessors of his favours. These he designs shall not only be the subjects of his goodness, but the instruments; not only the recipients, but the diffusers. And how can we neglect to impart relief and comfort to others, which God is so graciously communicating to us:—"Freely we have received, freely let us give"? It is in this way we may expect to have our mercies blessed, and this is the way also to have them increased. "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." The objects of our benevolent regards are numerous. "As we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith." These are the fatherless and the widows, whom we are to visit in their affliction; we have the sick to heal, the naked to clothe, and the hungry to feed. But there are also the careless to awaken, the ignorant to instruct, the vicious to reclaim, and the backsliding to restore. The soul is of supreme importance, and it becomes us peculiarly to aid in supporting those institutions and efforts which have in view the spiritual and eternal welfare of men. Christians not only see wants and miseries which distress them, but which excite in them a disposition to relieve according to their power; they are delighted to indulge a spirit of benevolence; and, with regard to the extension and promotion of the Redeemer's cause generally, they will endeavour to be accessory to its advance. And while they will be instant in praying that God's kingdom may come, and his word may have free course and be glorified, they will be forward in offering their aid, and will rejoice when those prayers are answered. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" should be our anxious and prayerful inquiry; and, if we have prayed for these objects sincerely and earnestly, consistency requires, if we would not be condemned out of our own mouths, that we should be forward to make every sacrifice in our power for these attainments.

Jan. 20.—*I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.* Ps. cxvi. 1, 2.

DAVID not only prayed, and observed the answers to his prayers, but improved those answers. We here see that he derived two things from the answers to his prayers. First, *an excitement to love and gratitude*. “I love the Lord,” &c. Some tell us (but who told them?) that real saving love to God must regard his perfections and not his benefits; that it must regard him, and what he is in himself, and not for what he bestows upon us. But are we to be wiser than the sacred writers? Do they not often enforce love to God by what he has done for us? Does not Paul say, “We beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”? Does not John say, “We love him, because he first loved us”? And does not David say, “Oh, fear the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing”? It is impossible for the heart to be in a right frame, unless it excites us to inquire, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?” Why are we not more thankful? Because we are not more attentive to the instances of God’s loving-kindness and tender mercies. These we should turn into so many songs of praise; this we find David doing. “Bless the Lord,” says he, “O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” This is not all. We should derive from it an *encouragement to hope and confidence*. “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.” Success always emboldens the beggar; he loves to approach the door where he has been relieved again and again. Those who can say, “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary,” will not be backward to repair to it again and again, that they “may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.” We now only see in part, and have but an imperfect view, for “how we see through a glass darkly; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Then “in God’s light shall we see light.” Then shall we see that all his works and ways have been in harmony with his word; what-

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ever apparent contradictions we may have imagined, we may be fully satisfied that all he does conduces to our advantage, however adverse some things may appear, and however we may, through unbelief, be induced to say, "All these things are against me." *Then* we shall see that he has been indeed a God hearing and answering prayer—that we *never* sought him in vain, but that, in some way or other, in some measure or degree, we have been benefited. Let us then be looking forward to that better world where we hope soon to arrive. Our *waiting* days will soon be over—and our *praying* days will soon be over, but

"Our days of *praise* shall ne'er be past,
While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures."

Jan. 21.—*Consider*. Hag. i. 5.

THE religion of the Bible is a reasonable service; nothing can be more widely different from groundless belief, or opposed to the enthusiasm of ignorant impulses, a heated imagination, or excited unintelligible feelings. It commences with "the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, so that we may see what is the hope of our calling;" and all its subsequent processes are carried on through the medium of a mind renewed by the Spirit of God. "Whatever is connected with love to God and obedience to his revealed will is the result of intention, and is influenced by corresponding motive. The Holy Spirit's influences do not operate in us like the cures of a charm, of whose efficiency no account can be given. A Christian is able to give a reason of the hope that is in him. We are not forced into religion as are the motions of a machine, insensible of its workings and results; nor as the varied operations of the functions of our physical being are carried on in our bodies, which act independently of the mind and will. We are not only subjects of religious influences, but also instruments in producing them in others. What is done *in* us is done *by* us. Therefore, says the apostle, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure." We are here taught that, while God is the Author of all good, and our progress in goodness is from him, yet he does not *carry* us along in the way everlasting, but enables us to *walk*. He works

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in us, but it is that we may *will* and *do*. We are not only impressed, but employed. Faith and repentance are gifts of God; yet *we* believe and repent, and not God.. Thus we see that all true religion arises from *consideration*. Therefore, God, complaining of the Jews, says, "My people do not consider." Therefore, David says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The Christian's abhorrence of sin is not a thoughtless aversion. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" His godly sorrow is not a thoughtless grief. "Then shall ye," says God, "remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." His confidence is not a thoughtless trust; it is the result of knowledge:—"They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee." His hope is not a presumptive expectation. He has "two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie," which give him sure anchorage for his hope, of which he is "ready to give a reason to every one that asketh." His patience in trouble is not the result of natural hardihood, or stoical apathy, or a reckless desperation: it is the effect of thought,—scriptural, sanctified thought. May we consider our ways, and the Lord give us understanding in all things!

Jan. 22.—*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.*
Matt. xxii. 29.

It is a sad thing that many persons, from whom better things might be expected, are so shamefully ignorant of the Scriptures. In consequence of not understanding them they are so liable to err—so liable to be led away with the error of the wicked, and carried away by every wind of doctrine, so as frequently not to know the way wherein they should walk, or the things they should do. It was of these errors arising from a deficiency of scriptural knowledge for which our Lord thus rebuked his own disciples. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." And, if the word of Christ dwell in some, it is not "richly and in all wisdom." There may be an abundance of Scripture truths laid up in the memory, but there may not be the wisdom to apply it. The apostle complains of some as not being "skilful in the word of life, for they are babes." "For when for the time," says he, "ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again

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which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." There are but few who do justice to the Scriptures in this respect. They are

"A broad land of wealth unknown,

"Where hidden glory lies;"

for, as David says, "they are exceeding broad."

"The cross, the manger, and the throne,

Are big with blessings yet unknown."

Let us seek to be better acquainted with them. "Search the Scriptures," says our Saviour, "for they are they which testify of me." Instead of imagining that we are very proficient in divine knowledge, let us pray with the apostle that we "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," and "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." But we are reminded that the duty of practising what the Scriptures teach and enjoin is not less than that of acquiring a knowledge of them. We read of "obeying the truth," and of "walking in the truth." We can never regard the Scriptures properly until we find them to be "a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path." Every thing in the Scriptures has a practical aim and tendency. Its doctrines are "according to godliness;" its "exceeding great and'precious promises" are given us, "that by these we might be partakers 'of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world through lusts." And "he that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure." Hume, the infidel, sneeringly said, "The Bible was given to keep the poor in order." If believed and acted upon, its truths will keep us all in order. It says as much to the rich as to the poor—as much to the master as it does to the servant—to the husband as it does to the wife, and as much to professors as to those who have the form of godliness without the power. We are servants: it is not for servants to dictate, but to obey. We are patients: it is not for patients to prescribe, but to submit. We are criminals offending: and it is the prerogative of the Sovereign offended to choose the way in which his mercy shall be exercised, or whether he shall exercise mercy at all. With regard to the mind and will of God concerning us, as revealed in the Scriptures, our only *inquiry* therefore should

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be, What may we hope to receive from God? and our prayer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Jan. 23.—*If his children forsake my law, and wattle not in my judgments; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* Ps. lxxxix. 30, 32.

GOD loves his children too well to allow them to act improperly, or suffer them to violate the discipline under which he has placed them, without visiting them with severe and loving rebuke. It were to suppose the greatest absurdity to imagine that God will suffer his authority to be despised and his law forsaken, his statutes broken and his decisions set at naught. The very discipline he exercises in his family shows that he has not abandoned them to their own wayward and foolish courses. He gives expression to his paternal tenderness towards his disobedient children:—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together." No; he will "not cast away his people whom he foreknew;" but this is the law of the house:—"he will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "Nevertheless," he says, "my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor cause my faithfulness to fail." And these corrections of our heavenly Father regard sins of omission as well as of commission. For he commands us to do as well as prohibits, and we forsake his law and break his statutes by neglecting to do what is enjoined upon us, as well as by doing what he has prohibited us from doing. These corrections regard the state of the heart as well as the conduct of the life. Where no deviation from the path of obedience, no miscarriages in duty, are apparent to others, our heavenly Father discovers a falling away in our feelings and motives. What a forsaking of first love—what ingratitude—what unbelief and distrust—what prodigality of time—what a perversion of that which is good—what misimprovement of privileges—does he discover in his children! These defections in duty, these backslidings of heart, call frequently and loudly for the rod of correction; and can there be any reason for wonder or surprise that we are afflicted? Surely we have more reason to sing, "It is of the

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Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our transgressions," but "his strokes are fewer than our crimes, and lighter than our guilt."

Jan. 24.—*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*
Prov. xii. 26.

"HE that doeth righteousness is righteous," and we know who hath said "the upright are his delight." This is the characteristic of a real Christian. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in the present world." It is thus "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life." Therefore it is that a man under the influence of this principle of righteousness is declared in the Scriptures to be more excellent than his unrighteous neighbour, however in other respects that neighbour may be distinguished. And this decision is according to truth. Let us endeavour to justify it. Who among the sons of the earth can be put in comparison with the real Christian. The rich? But he has the true riches,—durable riches and righteousness, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The honourable? But he is "great in the sight of the Lord;" he has the honour that cometh from God only. The learned? But he is made wise unto salvation; he has an unction from the Holy One, and knoweth all things. The conquering hero? But "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city." He subdues enemies that vanquish all other victors,—he is more than a conqueror; and the Captain of his salvation thus eulogizes and rewards him. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, and I will write upon him my new name." Compared with a Christian, what was Adam in Paradise? What blessings are equal to the blessings of grace and redemption, the righteous man's portion? These deliver from sin, death, and hell. What was the Garden of Eden to the righteous man's home, "the new heaven, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"? What was the tree of

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life to the only true Source of a righteous man's immortality, who "came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly"? We as creatures were made by an exertion of wisdom and power, but we are saved by the manifold wisdom of God, and by the "exceeding greatness of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Jan. 25.—*I am glad for your sakes that I loas not there, to the intent ye may believe.* John xi. 15.

IN the estimate of our Saviour there is nothing so valuable or important as faith. There is nothing he is so much concerned to promote in his people as their faith. "To the intent ye may believe." Observe: First, From our Saviour's language, it is obvious that *faith is no easy matter*. They who think so have never made the trial. Oh, to take God at his word—to hang on an invisible arm—to confide in a Being we have never seen, and to confide in him when we are conscious that we have sinned against him, and deserve to suffer his righteous displeasure! Oh, where is the Christian that has not often cried out, with the father of the lunatic, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"? We may see the difficulty of believing from the means he employs to promote it, so expensive, and from the persons for whom he here wishes it. Persons who had been with him from the beginning, and had seen his miracles,—these are the persons whom he upbraids for their unbelief, who cry, "Lord, increase our faith." The language shows—Secondly, *That faith admits of increase*. Why, they believed already, or they would not have forsaken all to have followed him. But they did not believe enough. What a difference there is between the faith of two Christians, and even in the same Christian at different periods! At one time it is like the mustard-seed, how small! At another time it is like the mustard-tree, how large! Some tell us that there is no such thing as growing in grace, though we are commanded to grow in grace, and though Paul says, "Your faith and love groweth exceedingly." And may not faith be more powerful in its degree, and more free in its sacrifices? While this humbles it should stimulate us. The dawn is good, but our path should be that of "the just, which shineth more and more

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unto the perfect day.” Thirdly, *The importance of faith* is to be gathered from these words of our Lord. Some persons seem afraid to say much on faith, as if it were prejudicial to morality. Why, they should know that faith is the tree that bears all the fruits of holiness, the spring from whence all holiness flows. No Christian is so celebrated for his faith as was Abraham; and there are none so celebrated for obedience. And this should not surprise us; it is what we should reckon upon. We read of the “analogy of faith”—the “law of faith”—the “work of faith”—the “obedience of faith”—the “fight,” the “prayer,” the “joy” of faith. Every thing has to do with this. In proportion as we believe, God is glorified; for strong faith giveth glory unto God. We are filled with all joy and peace in believing. Are we sanctified? It is “by faith that is in me.” Are we purified? “Purifying their hearts by faith.” Do we conquer? “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Do we stand? “We stand by faith.” Do we walk? “We walk by faith.” Do we live? Have we boldness and confidence? It is by faith. What says the apostle to the Ephesians? “Above all, taking the shield of faith.” What says Christ to Peter? “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Here we see what it was the enemy’s aim to injure, and what Christ designed to save—it was faith; and then Jesus and Satan both proclaim the importance of faith. Hence Christ said to his patients, “Be it unto you according to your faith,” and to his disciples, “Where is your faith?”

Jan. 26.—*I am, glad that I was not there.* John xi. 15.

GOD can accomplish the purposes of his love, by ways peculiar to himself. The friends of Lazarus would have said he ought to have been there. The Jews thought that he should have repaired to the scene of woe. The sisters fully expected this. They walked up and down the room, wringing their hands, and they said, “Where is he?” They looked out of the windows, and said, “Why is he so long in coming?” Calling the ploughman who was passing, they said, “John, go and look down the Galilean road, and see if Jesus is coming.” When he came, they could hardly help reproving him: Martha said, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;” and her sister Mary

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said the same. But Christ said, "I know what I have been doing; I am not acting in darkness; you will see it is better that your brother should rise from the dead, than that he should remain sick. Thus he says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not;" "Your ways are not my ways." I am not to be judged of by a human standard. His absence from these individuals was to show that his ways were not only different, but *superior* to theirs. "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts." The case of Joseph seemed very hard, and, from the love the Lord bore to him, we might have supposed he would have been there, to have saved him from the pit. But I am glad for his sake—for his family's sake—for his country's sake—for the church's sake—for our sake—that he was not there. Here are three Hebrews cast into a fiery furnace. We might have supposed the Lord should have been there to have saved them; but he was not, and I am glad that he was not. The flames only burst their bonds; the tyrant on the throne was divinely impressed, and constrained to adore. Wherever they went, persons turned and said, "There goes one of the three young men who chose to go into the fiery furnace rather than sin against God." How stripped and peeled was Job! When we see him the object of scorn and pity, we are ready to suppose the Lord had been there; but when we think of the end we are glad that he was not, and James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." When, therefore, our views and his dealings do not seem to harmonize, let us remember that he acts sovereignly—not arbitrarily:—"but he gives no account of his matters." His judgments are far above, "out of our sight." Let us suspend our opinions—never set his sun by our dial, but always our dial by his sun. We can see his heart, if we cannot see his hand. Do you ask where? Why, at Calvary. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" And can we doubt of his wisdom or his love? We should learn to judge by his views and by his testimony, and not by Other things. We know not what is good for us; we may judge wrongly:—

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain."

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." If we look

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back we shall see how often we have desired what would have been our injury and ruin if we had obtained it! And how often have we sought to escape from what we now see to be our chief blessing! We have charged him almost with wickedness, where we have now reason to believe that his kindness was peculiarly at work for our happiness. And if we see it not now we shall see it hereafter. Is it for us to judge of the skill of the artist from the first rough sketch? Should we not wait till it has received his masterly touches? Should we judge of the building while all the materials are rudely scattered about, especially if we had never seen the plan? No; we should wait till the top-stone is laid thereon. "Judge nothing before the time;" God will give a good account of himself. The saints above shout, "He hath done all things well!" "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Jan. 27.—*God commanded me to make haste.* 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

THESE words refer to war—one of the most fertile topics of all history. Ever since man became an apostate from his God, he has been an enemy to his brother; and from the death of Abel to this hour, our earth has been an "Aceldeina, the field of blood." But the sword shall not devour-always. An hour cometh when Christ "shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," at least so far as to pursue it as a profession. The words were spoken by the king of Egypt. He is called Neeho; that is, the club-footed. Many sovereigns have derived their principal and best distinction from some bodily quality. Thus, one has been called the Fair, another, Longimanus, or the Long-handed, and so of the rest. Necho was now waging war with Nebuchadnezzar, who had subdued Assyria, and was now glorying much in the title of the king of Assyria. He designed to attack him at Carchemish, on the borders of the river Euphrates; but on his way hither, he was assaulted by Josiah, king of Judah, who went forth and fought him at Megiddo, forty-five miles from Jerusalem. No reason is assigned for this action. All is not wise that wise men

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do; all is not good that good men do. There are seasons in which, in even wise and good men, both grace and sense are asleep. Josiah's action was rash; he intermeddled with strife not belonging to him. His best apology, perhaps, would be that Necho was marching through a part of Judea. But then, first, this part did not belong to him; and, secondly, if Necho had passed through, he might have done so, as Israel formerly desired to pass through the borders of Moab, engaging to commit no injury, and to pay for all they used. But alas! Josiah consulted his feelings rather than his convictions; and passion is always a sad counsellor. It is obvious that he did not ask counsel of the Lord,—“Shall I go up, or shall I forbear?” And yet he had with him not only that famous prophet Jeremiah, but Zephaniah and Urijah, and a whole college of seers. Whenever we decline asking counsel, it betrays a secret consciousness that we are not doing right; and it is miserable to engage in any enterprise, especially an important one, without inward satisfaction. Whenever, therefore, we err, we should err conscientiously, in order that we may maintain peace within; and we should never think of prospering in any undertaking, unless we acknowledge God in all our ways. Yea, Josiah not only refuses to ask counsel, but he rejects the fairest warnings and remonstrances; for Necho even sent ambassadors to him, saying, “What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah?” He reasons with him, first, from a principle of equity:—“I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have warred.” And, secondly, he reasons with him from a principle of religion:—“For God commanded me to make haste” in this affair—from some dream, or some impulse which he had, and which he believed to be from God; and which probably was really from him, for we read in the words following that it was “from the mouth of God.” And, thirdly, he reasons with him from a principle of interest:—“Forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.” What was the result of all this? “Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot,

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and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem; and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers.”

Jan. 28.—*And the archers shot at king Josiah; and he died, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for king Josiah.*

2 Chron. xxxv. 23, 24.

WE do not infer from thence that Josiah perished forever. Far from it; the manner of his death was indeed a divine correction; and this is the law of God's house. "While the Lord in his dealings with his people takes vengeance on their inventions, yet, as David observes, "He forgives their iniquities." He therefore received Josiah to himself; and his death, though a violent one, was in one sense even a privilege to himself, and so it had been spoken of in an earlier announcement, where God said, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes and weep before me, I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place." He, therefore, died at peace with God, and was spared the sight of the desolation of Jerusalem, and the destruction of his country. Thus, the Lord often removes his servants from the evil to come, and calls home his ambassadors before he declares war. But, though it was only a correction to himself, it was really a punishment to the people. They were unworthy of the reign of such a prince, and they were no longer to be borne with. Hence it was that God suffered him to be so infatuated as to expose his precious life, that by his death he might remove the hinderance that kept back the judgments of God which were ready to be poured in upon the land. For the godly are, as Jeremiah says, those who "stand in the breach," and who keep back invading calamities. Yea, they are called "the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in." Yea, they are called "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." But observe the impression his death made:—"And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all

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the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel, and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations." Some may not wonder that Jeremiah should have mourned over him; he was "the weeping prophet," and he foresaw what would be the consequence of this dispensation. But perhaps they do wonder that "all Judah and Jerusalem" should have so mourned, and that it was made even an ordinance to learn and to sing the mournful dirges for the occasion. But good men have a witness in the consciences of bad men. Witness Balaam, who said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And want endears and increases worth. As Young says,—

"How mercies brighten as they take their flight!"

While the living minister is neglected, the dying one may be lamented, and lamented the more when dead because he was neglected while living. The children of Israel were always complaining of Moses, and frequently threatening him; yet they wept for him on the plains of Moab thirty days, and, we are persuaded, sincerely.

Jan. 29.—*Nevertheless, let us go to him.* John xi. 16.

THE Saviour is never too late in his movements, or too confident in his resources. We often mistake: we undertake enterprises which we are not able to conclude. We begin what we are not able to finish. Then, there are different degrees of weakness and of strength. Bring two men to a staff: one will be able to break it, and the other not. But bring them to a mast, and they will both fail. But God has all power. "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." "Nevertheless," says the Saviour, "let us go to him." Observe—to him; not to them. "Why, for what purpose? It is too late—he is dead." "It may be too late for you, but not for me. I turn the shadow of death into the morning. Your extremity is my opportunity. I love not only to do what is needful for my people, but to surprise them. I love to do for them above all they can ask or think. I love to help them when all helpers have withdrawn, and because they have withdrawn."

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“Go to him?—why, he is laid out! he is dead!” Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Can the grave praise thee? He cannot receive thy visit! “But he can; he can hear me, he shall see me. He shall find that I am the resurrection and the life.” And did he go in vain? Ah! Christians have their spots to which they retire; they often go to the grave to weep. Ah! could they fetch out the remains there deposited? Could they bring back a mother, a sister, a wife? It is in vain they stand there. But Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth!” and immediately he came forth. Oh, what a journey was that! Nevertheless, “let us go unto him.” Had you seen him you would only have seen one like yourselves. One of the disciples would here have stepped back and said, “Do you know who that is?” “No.” “Why, ’tis Jesus of Nazareth. Lazarus, a friend of his, is dead, and he is going to make his lungs heave, and to cause his blood again to flow in his veins; and the next night he means to sup with him and a large party.” Oh, you would have said, “Let us go with him; he does all things well.” There are the Jews by the shore of the sea. They are to go forward. What! are they to go into the sea? Yes. What! are they to be drowned? No; he has all power, and will deliver them. Well, then, let us be no longer faithless, but believing.

Jan. 30.—*God commanded me to make haste.* 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

WE have already noticed these words in their connection. We now take them independent of the circumstances under which the command was originally given, and consider them as language which we may and ought to adopt as our own. God commands us also “to make haste.” Any truth may furnish us with matter for meditation; and, if there be a truth in the Bible, (and we cannot either deny or question this,) this is one, that God has “commanded us to make haste” concerning some things and principles. But the question is, what is haste? Haste is not hurry. Hurry always implies a kind of disordered and confused effort, as if something had been forgotten or overlooked, and seems always to infer a single and transient exertion. This is not the same with speed, nor is it favourable to speed. “I have too much to do,” said one, “ever to be in a hurry.” There are

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some persons, indeed, who seem always to be in a hurry or bustle, and they would appear to be persons of business and despatch. No such thing; they are "important nothings in a juggler's box." Some who ought to rise at six are coming to life about eight, and running for hours after their work, and then doing it superficially and slatternly too. But by haste is meant application, diligence, zeal; something opposed not to entire omission or neglect, but to slow and careful performance requiring excitement. It means exertion; but it is that exertion which arises from reflection rather than that which is the result of impulse, and which was exemplified by David when he said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."

Jan. 31.—*God commanded me to make haste.* 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

THERE are three things concerning which God "commands us to make haste." The first is, to *secure the salvation of the soul*. This is to be our principal concern. Our first question is not to be, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" But, says the Saviour, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Why, what is our condition? We are ready to perish. And what is it to perish! We are required therefore to "flee from the wrath to come," like Lot and his family when the fiery deluge was coming down. God says to us, as he said to them, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." We are to flee to Jesus, "as the doves fly to their windows" when they see the gathering storm coming. We are to "flee for refuge to the hope set before us;" as the manslayer, under the law, fled in order to escape the avenger of blood. A man may be considered in a state of salvation when he is pardoned, and when he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. But this is not all which is to engage our attention and zeal. This haste may be applied, Secondly, to *a course of godliness*. "As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord," says the apostle, "so walk in him." "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and

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godly in the present world." Zeal is to appear in every thing here. Our faith is to be active as well as real; for unless it produce good works it is "dead, being alone." Our hope is not only to be living, but lively. "We are to love one another." But is this all? "We are to love one another with a pure heart, fervently." "We are to pray." But is this all? "We are to pray and not to faint." "Then shall they find me," says God, "when they seek me with all their heart." The apostle, in addressing the Romans, says, "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The Greek word is "boiling hot," in opposition not to coldness only, but to lukewarmness. And we should remember the address of our Saviour to the professors of Laodicea:—"Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." We are engaged in running a race, and surely a race requires haste; and thus it is—that we are enjoined "so to run that ye may obtain." But we are not to be concerned only to grow in grace ourselves, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, but this haste will apply, Thirdly, to *our efforts in seeking the welfare of others*. This also has devolved upon us. We are required to "look every man, not on his own things, but on the things of others." We are not only required to be diligent in gaining good, but in doing good. "As we have opportunity," we are to "do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." There are a thousand ways in which we may be useful, if we are so disposed; "and be not weary," says the apostle, "in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." We should be concerned to obtain the Saviour's approbation, who said of one of the churches, "Thou hast laboured and hast not fainted; and I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first." And there should be no delay here—no indolence here. Solomon says, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee." We are commanded, therefore, to make haste to be useful.

Feb. 1.—*How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?*
 Esther viii. 6.

RELATIVE affection, so far from being sinful, is amiable and praiseworthy. Alas, there are but few Christians but have some irreligious friends and relations. Surely for them they may and ought to be peculiarly concerned. There is a father who is thinking of his unruly son, and saying, "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." There is a sister sorrowing over an ungodly brother; a believing wife mourning over an unbelieving husband. And how natural it is, how becoming, thus to say with Esther, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" But the concern of the Christian is not to be confined here. It must reach others; it must extend to strangers, and even to enemies. It must cause us to resemble Paul, who said to Agrippa, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." This disposition is always the result of divine grace. Divine grace always produces a concern for the welfare of others. A Christian cannot conceal the rich and heavenly stores he has discovered, but will rather be for making them known. As the woman of Samaria felt, so will be his feelings and conduct: he will say,—

"Now will I tell to sinners round
 What a dear Saviour I have found;
 I'll point to his redeeming blood,
 And say, Behold the way to God."

Nor have Christians to go out of their own proper stations for this, but may preach to their children, their servants, their friends, and their neighbours. They need not go abroad as foreign missionaries, but they may be *Home Missionaries*,—such as our Saviour would make the delivered demoniac. He besought the Saviour that he might be with him. No, says he; but, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." All Christians are under a two-fold obligation to do this. First, An obligation of *gratitude*. Where much has been forgiven, the same ought to love much. And, Secondly, An obligation of *duty*. We should, therefore, seek to be useful. We may go to our fellow-sinners and say, I was once in the same state with you; oh that you were now in

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the same condition with me! Oh that the Lord would open my mouth, that I might show you what a change I have experienced in having been delivered from this present evil world, from the Bower of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son! Oh, come, taste, and see for yourselves 'that the Lord is o-ood. Thus we have seen that a man cannot keep his religion to himself. If he has any it will show itself; "for we cannot," said the apostles, "but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "And," says our Saviour, "if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out."

Feb. 2.—*That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.* Phil. i. 9.

AFTER all we know of Christ and divine things, how slight is our acquaintance with the one or the other! There is a hope laid up for the Christian in heaven, but what know we of it as yet? Believers partake of a joy, but that joy is "unspeakable and full of glory." The Saviour, therefore, addressing Nathanael, says, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." The apostle prays for the Ephesians, that they might be "able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." He allows that this love is incomprehensible, yet he prays that they may be able to comprehend it; he allows that it passeth knowledge, and yet desires that they may know it; that is, that they may have more enlarged and influential views of it. There is not only a real but a wonderful difference as to knowledge between believers and others, and between their present and their future state,—as much difference as between night and day. But in God's light they see light; that is, they see things divinely; or, as Archbishop Usher expresses it, "As the sun can only be seen by its own shining, so God can only be known by his own revelation." The apostle speaks of God's revealing his Son *in* him, as well as *to* him; and when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, there are no new revelations made to the mind; that is, no new revelations that are new in themselves: they are indeed new to us. They were, however, all in the

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Scriptures before we saw any of these things, but the Saviour promised to his disciples that the Spirit of truth should guide them into all truth; not only into the belief of it, but into the enjoyment of it, into the experience of it, and into the power of it. Christians not only see the reality of the things revealed, but their infinite excellency. They are supremely enamoured with them. They feel their infinite value. They live under their influence. And thus they evince that they are “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Feb. 3.—That which I have committed unto Him *against that day*. 2 Tim. i. 12.

THE apostle, in the prospect of that day, deposited something in the Redeemer's hand. Let us inquire what this *deposit* was. It is evident it was something personal, and something in which he acted as a believer. And it is not necessary to exclude any thing from the transaction, but principally we are to understand *the eternal concerns of the soul*. And if this required any confirmation, it may be derived from Stephen the Protomartyr, who, when he was dying, said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” and from the experience of David, who in an hour of danger said, “Into thy hand I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, o Lord God of truth.” The act means, therefore, simply believing. Various are the views given us, in the Scriptures, of faith in the Son of God. When the sacred writers spoke of faith, they never placed it before the people in the nakedness of metaphysical abstraction. They described rather than defined, and exemplified rather than described. One thing we may observe, that in all their representations of faith they made it to have to do immediately and expressly with the Lord Jesus. But then they held forth this faith as clothed in attributes and varied in its actings. Sometimes this faith was a “coming” to Christ—sometimes a “fleeing” to him—sometimes a “receiving” him—sometimes a “trusting” in him—and here a “committing” of the soul into his blessed hands; this is the evidence, this is the consequence, of real faith; and there is no one single term that enters so fully into the nature of saving faith, as confidence or trusting in Christ. The apostle's representation of faith here will remind us of several things. The committing our eternal

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all into his hand implies, in the first place, *conviction*. The man before was deluded by error and blinded by ignorance, but now the eyes of his understanding are opened. Now he is convinced of the value of his soul, and sees that the worth of it is beyond all comparison, according to the language of our Saviour:—«What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” He is now convinced of the danger of the soul: it is ready to perish,—not as to the physical destruction of its being or powers, but as to the destruction of its welfare, its happiness, and its hopes. And now, too, he is convinced of his inability to save his own soul; he sees and he feels that he cannot atone for his offences—that he cannot furnish for it a justifying righteousness in which to appear before God—that he cannot renew and sanctify it, without which it can never enter into the kingdom of God. And this act implies also, Secondly, *A concern for its security and welfare*. His language now is, “How shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the high God? What must I do to be saved?” Before it was chiefly, “What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? or wherewithal shall I be clothed?” But a man who is acting as Paul did always, “against that day,” he would be ready to say, “It is of little importance what becomes of this poor body: let the worms devour it, let flames consume it, let the sea engulf it, let wild beasts feed upon it, provided my soul is safe in the day of the Lord Jesus.” The act of committing the soul to Christ also *implies application to the Redeemer for the purpose of salvation*. O thou Restorer of the human race! let this ruin be under thine hand. O thou heavenly Physician, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee. O thou Refuge from the storm, and Covert from the tempest, oh, receive and shelter me. Fourthly, It implies *submission*. The man is resigned to his method of salvation. This committing of the soul to his hands is as much an act of resignation as it is of application; and it is absolutely necessary; for, though the Lord Jesus is ready to undertake our case, we should remember one thing:—that he will have the whole management of it, or he will have nothing to do with it. And a convinced sinner is brought to this; he is brought to say, “Lord, I yield to thy pleasure; I must indeed be saved: but, O Lord, I am not come to dictate nor to prescribe; make known thy will, and I acquiesce.”

Feb. 4.—*I know whom I have believed.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

WE here see what satisfaction the apostle derived from his acquaintance with the great Depository himself:—"I know whom I have believed." But we should remember that the knowledge of which the apostle speaks is not the knowledge which he had of him before he believed in him. Then, indeed, he knew him, or his faith would have been folly, whereas it is "a reasonable service." When the apostle first trusted in him, he saw that there was the greatest reason for it in the world. It is therefore necessary that we should *know* him; we may love, and may rejoice in, an unseen Saviour, but not in an unknown one. Dr. Owen remarks that "all the operations of the Spirit of God are commenced and carried on in the renewing of the mind." Why would any person trust in another without some previous knowledge? Would they intrust a very valuable jewel in the hands of a perfect stranger? or would a person walk across a very deep abyss before he knew whether the plank was sound or rotten? Therefore we read that "by his knowledge he shall justify many." How is this? Some may inquire, Do we not everywhere read in the Scriptures that we are "justified by faith"? Surely; but "how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" Knowledge, therefore, we see, must precede every thing; and this was the case with the apostle. But then this knowledge is derived entirely from *testimony*, and from the testimony of the Scriptures. There is a knowledge derived from *experience* also, and "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." The believer knows these things from his own experience. "I know," says he, "that my poor soul was oppressed with a burden too heavy for me to bear, and I could obtain no relief till I applied to the blood of sprinkling," but by "believing I entered into rest." I know that "without him I can do nothing," and I know that "through his strengthening me I can do all things," for I have made the trial of both. I know that "it is good for me to draw near to God," for "a glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." He is a tried friend and Saviour. I have often tried him, and the more I have tried him the more I find that he corresponds perfectly with all that is said of him in the blessed book. I know whom I have trusted, and were it to do again I would so trust in him again. I have

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repented many things, but the longer I live the less am I disposed to repent of this. My views have changed with regard to many questions.—Oh! how I have been deceived, how I have been imposed upon, how I have been befooled by trifles in many things! But this does not apply to my trust in the Redeemer; here I have full satisfaction in the review of what I then did. The Christian has “tasted that the Lord is gracious;” and no wonder, therefore, having this knowledge, that he is concerned to bring others to enjoy it; no wonder that he speaks so much better on this subject than others,—“his heart teacheth his lips,” as Solomon says; no wonder that he speaks with earnestness, and with confidence, and with feeling, and commonly too with success, for he can say, as the first Christians did, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Feb. 5.—He is able *to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

WE have seen the states of action generally expressed, but here is a particular reference with regard to it. There is often a bar in the heart to the work of God, and it does not always consist in a contempt of him. There are many who feel fear, who are yet very desirous of being saved by him; and they resemble the father of the lunatic that came to our Saviour, and said, “Lord, if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us.” We must, therefore, bring our faith not only to the perception of the Saviour’s disposition, but to the apprehension of his all-sufficiency too. We must know that he is “the mighty God;” that he made and upholds all things by the word of his power; that he is all-wise to see the most concealed designs of his enemies against his people, and omnipotent to repel them. We must bring our faith to comprehend, not only his divine sufficiency, but his mediatorial sufficiency, and this peculiarly; that is, that “all power in heaven and in earth is given to him;” that “his blood cleanseth from all sin;” that, “his righteousness can justify the ungodly,” and give them a title to everlasting life; that nothing is “too hard for the Lord,” in the Way of renovation; that there is no want but he can supply;

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that there is no corruption but he can subdue; that there is no enemy but he can vanquish; so that, however trying our spiritual warfare may be, we may say nevertheless, "in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us;" so that, though errors abound, though apostasies multiply, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,—The Lord knoweth them that are his;" so that under a sense of my daily guilt, under the pressure of infirmities and imperfections, in the weaknesses of my grace, and in the variations of my frame, I may know still that he is "able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before his presence with exceeding joy." Now, the last thing that the believer has to trust in him for is the resurrection of his poor body. This will be a miracle, and the greatest of all miracles, and we know who is to be the performer. He whom we have trusted shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." A period is approaching, when he will "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,"—when he will give an account mediatorially of all the trusts which he undertook; and therefore it is called "The revelation of Jesus Christ." Then will this almighty Guardian say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Then will he say, Here are all the pupils which thou hast given me to educate, and what scholars have I made them all! here are all the patients that were intrusted to me to cure, and I have flung off them every particle of disease, and I have restored them to immortal youth and endless life; here are all the sheep, my Father, that thou gavest me to feed and to keep; "while they were in the world I kept them in thy name, and none of them is lost," not a lamb of them. And then, turning to believers, he will say, "You trusted me with your eternal all; and did you trust me in vain? I often tried your confidence: did I ever disappoint you? And was not the trial of it 'found unto praise, and glory, and honour'?" And they will exclaim, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," "for thou hast done all things well." "To whom be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Feb. 6.—*Oh, give thanks unto the Lord.* 1 Chron. xvi. 34.

IF we feel gratitude to our fellow-creatures for their favours, surely we shall not forget the boon of our salvation. There is nothing perhaps so vile as ingratitude in man's esteem. It is properly said, that if we call a man ungrateful we call him every thing that is vile. The Lacedemonians made ingratitude a punishable crime. There is nothing that we hate so much in others, perhaps, as ingratitude, especially when it is displayed towards us where we expect love, and therefore we soon show our resentment by discontinuing our favours. Why do we not hate it equally in ourselves when we discover its operations towards the blessed God? For, after all, what is the ingratitude of any one of our fellow-creatures, which we resent, compared with our ingratitude towards the Infinite Benefactor? If he were to discontinue his favours, would his sun any more shine? would his rain any more descend upon us,—his mercies any more be new every morning? or should we be daily loaded with benefits? In what a state of destitution and wretchedness should we then be found! But how are we to express our thanksgivings towards God? Gratitude consists in *the return of a benefit received*. Among men it may be so expressed as that a full equivalent may be made for any favour we have received,—yea, more than an equivalent. But it can never be so expressed between God and man. We can never discharge our obligations to him. But we are to feel gratitude continually; and, though we cannot make an adequate return, yet we may make a *suitable one*. Gratitude will appear in this. We may be prompted to ask, "What shall We render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Then this grateful concern will appear in the sentiments of the mind, in the disposition of the heart, in the language of the lip, but, above all, in the language of the life, for this speaks loudest. "Thanksgiving," says Philip Henry, "is good, but thanksgiving is much better." When "we show forth his praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and walking before, him" "blameless in love." The best way in which we can show our gratitude is in the degree and the quality of the fruit we bear. What is the best way in which a scholar can testify the honour of his tutor? Why, by his proficiency. And our Saviour, al-

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hiding to both these images, says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye also be my disciples." It is lamentable to find that there is so little of this thankfulness now. "Oh," says David, "that men would praise the Lord for his goodness I" We are backward to all the duties of religion, but sluggish as to praise. We are backward enough to pray; but our necessities urge us to pray, our difficulties urge us to the throne of grace, and, when we have succeeded, we are far too prone to act like the lepers:—"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Where is Hezekiah? He was restored from his sickness, and was so affected that he wrote a fine hymn, and gave it to the leader of the band, and had it sung in the temple, and said, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do to this day." But afterwards, it is said, "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefits done unto him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and all his children."

Feb. 7.—*If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*
John viii. 51.

CHRISTIANS are mortal like other men. Will they not therefore die? "No," says the Saviour, "they will not die." Death comes to them so changed, so glorious, so beatific, that we will not use the name. They "shall not see death." What then? They shall go home; they shall be gathered to their own people; they shall depart to be with Christ, which is far better; they shall fall asleep in Jesus. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Oh, surely he is a conqueror of death who will be delivered from the state as well as the sting of death; and this is the case with regard to every Christian. Mark, therefore, the language of the apostle in reference to them, when he says, "The body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,"—(here Paul attaches two limitations to the death of the believer, it only affects his poor body,)—"the body is dead because of sin"—the soul is not touched—"the spirit is life because of righteousness," and it immediately joins the spirits of just men made perfect. Then in the next place he says it is only temporary; the part affected will not remain under its grasp; no, the body will be revived, and will live as well as

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the spirit, and become immortal:—"But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Thus the Christian has a prospect, therefore, not only of being delivered from the sting of death, but also from the very state itself. When Jacob was going down into Egypt, though it was even to see his son Joseph, and he had said, "It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive, and I will go down and see him before I die," yet when he came to the verge of Egypt his old withered frame began to tremble, so that God appeared to him and said, "Jacob, fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will make of thee a great nation; I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will surely bring thee up again." And this is what God says to every believer with regard to the grave:—"Be not afraid to go down into the grave; I will go down with thee, and I will bring thee up again."

Feb. 8.—*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

THE apostle here combines these two enemies together, because it is hardly possible to treat them separately. We find this figure employed even in the Jewish Scriptures. There Isaiah says, "He shall swallow up death in victory." And thus God says by Hosea, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction, repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Thus the apostle says, "He hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, as to this victory over death, we may remark that he certainly conquers death who is not and cannot be injured by it, and to whom it is therefore expressly harmless. This is the case with every Christian. The apostle tells the believing Corinthians that death was stingless with regard to them; that it stung once, and a dreadful sting it was; that it stung our Surety, who took our place for us; but, though it stung him, it left its sting in him, so that there was none for the Christian. The sting of death Was sin; he bore our sin in his own body on the tree, and put

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away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and then, as Dr. Watts says,—

“If sin be pardon’d, I’m secure;
 Death has no sting beside:
 Thy law gives sin its damning power,
 But Christ my ransom died.”

Yes, and that is not all: he who conquers death will be improved by it; he rises with a much better body than he lay down; the body will not be a burden—it will not be a clog—it will not require as now the greater part of our time in providing for its support—it will want no such provision—it will never want a surgeon’s knife, or a physician’s medicine, or the milliner’s ingenuity, or a machine to drag the dulness hither and thither. Oh, what a change! so that the spirit itself, our spiritual body, will be an advantage to the soul. It will be reunited with the immaterial universe—from which it was severed before for want of a suitable organization—reunited to the immortal universe. Oh, what a world will that be which it will enter!—what sounds will charm it!—what fruits will it taste!—what abundance will be there! The model of the Christian’s future body is that body which shone above the brightness of the sun at noonday, when it appeared on Mount Tabor—that body in which the Saviour will judge the world in righteousness—that body which he will wear forever, and through which we shall hold our communion with him. Once more. He has conquered death who rises above the apprehension of it, and realizes all this joy and all this blessedness even now. The first Christian could say, with the apostle, “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.” Verily, this looks like overcoming. “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;”—the victory over death and the grave.

Feb. 9.—*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 John iii. 8.

AND we know how he succeeded. When he had sent forth the seventy disciples, and had given them power over unclean spirits, he followed them as they went, and said, “I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven;” and, as the last hour and the

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power of darkness drew on, he said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." "Now," says he, "is the iudgment of this world." "Now is the prince of this world cast out." "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The world shall change Masters, and instead of following him they shall follow me. But it may be asked, "Did he not fall in the struggle?" When a man is slain in the battle, why should you consider him as a conqueror? If it only produced such a conclusion as this, his triumph was short, it was but for a moment. It is true Jesus fell; but it was in falling that he conquered. "He spoiled," says the apostle, "principalities and powers; he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them by his cross." And because "the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Thus our Lord delivers his people from the power of darkness, and brings them into his own kingdom. "When a strong man armed," saith he, "keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, he taketh from him all. his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoil." So that, from that period, properly speaking, the combat begins with him. Before this, Christians did not oppose him, and he did not oppose them. Why did he not? Because he had them in safe custody; they were his bond-slaves, and they were led captive by him at his will. But when they were emancipated from his control, then he followed them as apostates from his cause,—then he burned with inextinguishable ire to overtake and destroy them. Then he pursued after them like Pharaoh; and, like Pharaoh, his attempt will issue, not in their destruction, but in his own. "Yes," says the Apostle John, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Not touch the Christian! He has touched him a thousand times. How often does he awaken his fears!—how often does he distress his conscience! Not touch him; the devil not touch him! Not so as essentially to injure him—not so as to destroy him—not so as to overcome him. We see an exemplification of this in the experience of Peter. "Simon, Simon," says our Lord, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he

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may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." But did not Peter's faith fail? It did, indeed, as to its exercise, but not as to principle. It did fail for a minute, but it immediately recovered. The bough was bowed down by the violence of the wind, but it soon recovered its uprightness, and pointed towards heaven again. It required but a look from Jesus, and all was in motion again as before:—"He went out and wept bitterly." Yes; thus shall it be with all the Lord's people; and therefore, says the apostle to the Romans, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Feb. 10.—*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.* Ps. cxix. 136.

IT is the surest evidence of the renewed mind to which we can refer, when we are weeping for the sins of others, as they do not expose us to condemnation, and with it, if we mourn over them, it must be from a religious principle. God knows this; and God is so pleased, therefore, that we read in Ezekiel that the executions were stayed till the man with the inkhorn had impressed a mark on the foreheads of all who mourned and sighed for the abominations that were done in the land at Jerusalem. Wherever the Christian sees sin, he sees something that dishonours God—something that destroys a soul—something that crucifies the Lord of life and glory; and he can say, with David, "I beheld the transgressors and was grieved." He cannot see God's law trampled upon—hear God's name blasphemed—witness the contempt thrown upon the sacred day and upon the glorious gospel of his Lord and Saviour—without feeling aggrieved. The people of the world often reproach the Lord's people with being mopish and melancholy. Ungrateful beings! to reproach them for this, when they themselves are the cause of a great deal of their distress and sorrow. They weep because others never weep; they mourn, because others never mourn. They know the dangers to which sinners are exposed, though they themselves are not aware of it. They see that "their damnation lingereth not—that their destruction slumbereth not:" and when these things come near home—when they regard their own immediate connections—how can they help saying, with Esther, "How can I en-

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ture to see the destruction of my kindred?" In the West of England, a pious man and woman resided, who had a son,—a favourite son, too; but he was of an infidel turn. A minister, who had some reputation for eloquence, was to preach in the place. They persuaded him to attend; and, as he was fond of good speaking, he complied with their invitation. The subject was the happiness of the heavenly world. All seemed charmed: but when he looked into a corner of the pew he saw his mother weeping and when he looked into another corner of the pew he saw his father weeping. When they arrived at home they asked him how he liked the preacher. "Oh," he said, immediately, "this is good natural speaking: but what in the world could induce you to weep, while all the rest seemed so delighted?" "Oh," said the mother, "I wept not because I feared I should lose this blessedness, but at the thought, my son, of your being deprived of it." "Ah," said the father, "seeing your mother weep, I wept also at the same thought." They said no more, (and nothing is ever gained by noise and wordiness:) he immediately retired, and in his chamber said, "I have made my dear father weep and I have made my dear mother weep long enough: it is now time to weep for myself. God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Feb. 11.—*Our vile body*. Phil. iii. 21.

HOWEVER we may pamper, or adorn, or indulge the body, it is what the apostle calls it:—a vile body,—or, as it is in the margin, the body of our humiliation." And how humble is it in the lowness of its appetites—in the multitude and importunity of its wants—in the frailty of its frame—in the numerous diseases to which it is exposed, the seeds of which are often in the constitution, and, by external circumstances, ripen and bring forth fruit unto death! How often can an accident dismember or confine us! A few grains of sand, by collecting together in the body, will produce an obstruction that will yield such excruciating torment 'that the man chooses strangling and death rather than life. "Dropsy is drowning one, fever is burning up another, the palsy is benumbing a third, the ague is chilling a fourth." "Am I not made to pass months of vanity?" says Job, "and wearisome nights are appointed unto me. When I lie down I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossings

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to and fro, unto the dawning of the day." Here is another picture: (never were there such painters as the sacred writers:) "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his hones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat, and his flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyer." Admitting that this be not the case, allowing the constitution to be ever so vigorous, age impairs it, and loads it with infirmity, so that the man says, I cannot see, I cannot hear: "those that look out of the windows are darkened, the strong men bow themselves, the voice of the grinding is low, there is fear in the way, the grasshopper is a burden, desire fails because man goeth to his long home." And we may observe here, also, that these physical evils often becloud the mind; they often lead us to draw the conclusion that we have no part nor lot in the matter, and that our heart is not right in the sight of God himself. They often, also, deprive a Christian of the public means and ordinances of religion. He is the Lord's prisoner. He can say, "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me, for I had gone with the multitude that kept holy day." "But we," says the apostle, "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

Feb. 12.—*When I would do good, evil is present with me.*

Rom. vii. 21.

THE chief sorrows of Christians are those which arise from their sins and infirmities. Paul, who was a great saint, speaks of these as he does of none of his other imperfections. "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! For a Christian to know that he is under obligation continually to do good, and yet to feel that when he would do good evil is present with him; to know that his progress is necessary, and to feel himself hindered at every step; to feel vain thoughts lodging within him; to feel cold affections in duty,—such as a want of faith, and spirit, and liveliness in devotional exercises, in the closet, and at the family altar, and in the sanctuary,—how

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atly it distresses him! for he has a conscience that is living and awake. It is inconsistent with our new and spiritual nature to perceive our deficiencies and not be affected by them; to love purity and feel so much pollution; to have a faithful God and an almighty Saviour who is worthy to be trusted, and not be able to confide in him; to know that the promises “are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus,” and yet be unable to believe in them; to have an Infinite Benefactor, and yet cannot praise him; to be eager to go forward in their course, and yet be behind; to wish to be workmen that need not be ashamed, and never be able to put anything out of their hands that is not marred and spoiled as Boon as it is done, and unfit for the Great Master’s use; to enter into the presence of a Being they so much love, and come thither with so much that they know he must hate; never to be able to lean on his dear bosom without piercing it. Oh, says the Christian, how wretched I feel! for I have the best of masters, and he has the worst of servants in me; and, still more, so to oblige him to say, “My sun of experience, like Joshua’s, is standing still;” or, worse, My sun of experience, like the dial of Ahaz, has been “gone back ten degrees.” This leads him to inquire,—

“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?”

And by fresh trials, administered by the providence of God, he discovers fresh corruption, looks again into the chamber of imagery, and inquires, “Lord, who can understand his errors? “Cleanse thou me from secret faults?”

Feb. 13.—*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, hut also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.* 1 Thess. i. 5.

WE need not be informed that all to whom the gospel comes do not receive it. The Scripture speaks of such persons as these under various awful representations: as neglecters of the grace of God, “as turning away from him that speaketh from heaven,” “as treading under foot the Son of God,” as making light of the message of his servants, and going their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. It addresses their eyes,

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but, alas! they are closed; It addresses their ears, but they are stopped up. It addresses their hearts, but they are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. It addresses their passions, but they are all running mad after the things of the world. But as to the Thessalonians, it came to them in the "demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." They received it therefore as an immediate revelation from God, though delivered by man. To the Thessalonians it was a novelty, even in itself; to us, who are born in a land of vision, it is a novelty only as a matter of experience. But when the ministry of the word becomes the ministry of the Spirit, the man is then "called out of darkness into his marvellous light;" and, however acquainted with the things before, they now impress him as new. Thus he resembles one born blind, who, if his eyes were opened, would not see a new sun, but the same which has been shining from the beginning; but it would be a new sun to him, for he never saw it before. There are some who receive the gospel more feelingly and suddenly; and they resemble Zaccheus in the tree, who, as soon as he heard our Saviour say, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house," made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. Some are more slow under admonition. The man is gradually impressed and enlightened; he has to feel and fight his way, and to drop his prejudices by degrees; he sets off, like the dawn, with a few rays, but his "path is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Another from no good motive goes to hear the word; he gives the preacher a look half wondering and half frowning. As the preacher proceeds, he begins to feel, and he blushes, as if he were "known of all and judged of all." He is full of alarm and resentment, and yet he cannot leave the place. He goes home, and, being uneasy, is fretful and discontented. He betakes himself to his companions in dissipation, but they no longer please:—"miserable comforters are they all." He hates the place where he was made so uneasy, yet he cannot keep away. Again he goes, and learns more of his depravity and danger. He determines, therefore, that he will mend, and that he will not only "turn over a new leaf," but become "a new creature." But soon he feels that he is unable to perform his vow; and now is the danger lest he should be induced to say, There is no hope; lest despair should link him effectually to an unconverted state. He goes

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again and now he learns that what hinders his salvation is not his depravity, is not his guilt, is not his weakness, but his unbelief and his pride. He finds that it is unnecessary to build a refuge of his own: there is a refuge already provided; he has only to enter it. Instead of furnishing himself with a righteousness, he has to submit only to the righteousness which is of God. He finds that "to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Obedience he sees is required, but it is already provided for him in that dear One in whom he has not only righteousness but strength. He now regards good-works, not as peace-offerings, but as thank-offerings; and, "by the mercies of God, presents his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God as his reasonable service."

Feb. 14.—*Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.* 1 Thess. i. 6.

THE apostle alludes to the persecutions which these primitive believers met with from Jews and heathens, and of which we have some account in the Acts of the Apostles. This magnified their reception of the gospel, for they received it when they were exposed to losses, to imprisonments, to sufferings, and even to death. We know little of persecution; none of it is sanctioned in our happy country by law: but then we well know that law cannot remove the enmity of the human heart. There are many wives, and children, and servants, and workmen, and tradesmen, who hear the word under various menaces, and some privations, and some ill treatment, as far as it can proceed without being actionable. And "the tongue can no man tame." Reproach is a species of persecution. The Ishmaels will 'mock the Isaacs; and as it was then, so is it now: "he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit;" and "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." But we must remember that there may be much affliction when there is no persecution. Oh, how many a private sufferer is there whose heart "knows his own bitterness"! Yes; there are many now who "receive the word in much affliction," personal and relative. Observe, they receive the word, not only "in much affliction," but with "*joy of the Holy Ghost.*" Not a carnal joy,

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not a worldly joy, but that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit; that joy which much affliction cannot hinder,—the “joy of the Holy Ghost.” Observe, Paul’s religion made him suffer, but it did not deprive him of pleasure; yea, he says, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” When he and Silas had been scourged, and thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, at midnight they not only prayed but sang praises to God in the prison. “And,” says Paul, “not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” So we see peace in the Saviour, and tribulation in the world, are very compatible with each other. There must be, therefore, something in Christianity which is very congenial with joy, otherwise these things could not be true; and they are true. It brings us “glad tidings of great joy, which are for all people.” Thus it was originally understood and embraced. The Thessalonians received the word “in much affliction,” yet with joy “in the Holy Ghost.” Ah! they were then “filled with all joy and peace in believing.” Nor is the gospel changed; the Saviour is the same now as he was then. There is the same efficacy in his blood, and completeness in his righteousness, and power in his arm, and love in his heart. If, therefore, we do not understand and receive the truth in the same manner as the Thessalonians had received it, there must be a mistake somewhere. “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.”

Feb. 15.—*We love him because He first loved us.* 1 John iv. 19.

DR. DODDRIDGE had a very amiable child who died under nine years of age: she was a universal favourite among all who knew her. And one day when her father asked her, “How is it that all love you?” she replied, “I cannot tell, unless it be that I love everybody.” This was not only a striking answer for a child, but it was even a philosophical one, if I may so say. Seneca has given us a recipe for love, or a love-charm, prescribed by an old philosopher, and the only charm that ever did, or can, or will produce it, namely, “Love,” says he, “if you would be loved.” Why, love is governed by certain laws, as well as every

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thing else in the universe. It is not in our power to love an unlovely object; but, though not always in our power to love, it is always in our power to be loved if we choose. Most persons wish to be loved: some, indeed, are half angry, or at least orieved because they are not so much loved as some of their neighbours and acquaintances; but they do not remember that what they require of these towards them does not depend upon others but upon themselves. If any are filled with self-conceit and self-sufficiency, if they are hard-hearted and close-fisted, if they are mean and stingy and hoarding and grasping, and if in every thing they show only a regard to their own advantage, what mortal upon earth can love them? We do not refer now to benevolence, but to esteem and attachment. What mortal upon earth can love such persons? And how foolish and wicked must they be to expect it and exact it from a fellow-creature! "He that will have a friend," says Solomon, "must show himself friendly;" and he that would be loved must show himself lovely. "Let no man," says Paul to Timothy, "despise thee." How can I help this? Am I to be made answerable for the feelings of others towards me? Surely you are, says the apostle. No man can despise you unless you choose. One man may oppose you, another persecute you; but display the proper feelings and maintain the proper courage of a Christian and a Christian minister, and it will not be in the power of any individual to despise you. So said Paul. Suppose persons wished to be loved, and were to scold people for not loving them; suppose they were to order others to love them, and threaten them if they do not: would this secure the effect? This would drive them further off than before. It is goodness alone that makes one man love another. Power may cause a man to be feared; authority, to be revered; wealth, to be envied; learning, to be admired; genius, to be praised; but it is only goodness that chains one heart to another:—"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die." It is absurd to think of ever producing love by a legal process. The law is indeed good, and the law requires us to love Grpd with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, and it can righteously require nothing less; but then it can never produce this. The law worketh wrath, and upon a mind conscious of guilt it can work nothing else till we have an

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assured hope of forgiveness. Love never was produced, and never can be produced, by a mere display of terror, or even authority.

“Law and terrors do but harden
 All the while they work alone;
 But a sense of blood-bought pardon
 Soon dissolves a heart of stone.”

Feb. 16.—*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish, in the land, of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.* Isa. xxvii. 13.

TRUMPETS were much used among the Jews. Trumpets directed their journeys and animated them on their march. Trumpets roused them to arms against the invader, and sounded the dreadful onset to battle. Trumpets proclaimed the joys of victory, and called the people to divide the spoil. But on sacred as well as civil occasions was the trumpet used. Trumpets called the people together to the services of religion, just as our parish-bells call people to church. One of these services in particular was called “the feast of trumpets,” when from the morning until the evening the trumpets sounded over the sacrifices. The feast of “Jubilee” is too remarkable to be passed over. It was called the “acceptable year of the Lord;” it was celebrated on the day of atonement. As the people were fasting and afflicting themselves before the Lord, the trumpet sounded “throughout the land.” And what were its announcements? It proclaimed relaxation from all servile work; the earth spontaneously yielded her increase, and of the produce all were allowed to partake. It announced that every insolvent debtor was discharged from his creditor; that every bond-servant was free; that every lapsed inheritance returned to its original owner: all this was typical. To this it is supposed David refers when he says, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.” Yet we imagine the reference in the prophecy is not to this institution, and for this reason:—the Jubilee trumpet regarded the Jews in their own land, this, in other lands; it was to be heard in the “land of Assyria” and in the “land of Egypt.” The case was this:—From the common use of the trumpet among the Jews, its sound

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became typical of a proclamation of good. This prophecy refers especially to the proclamation of Cyrus. They were previously in circumstances of deep distress; they were oppressed by those who carried them away captive; they were worn down by fatigue and disappointment; and when God turned away their captivity they seemed like men that dreamed. Their deliverance was altogether unlooked-for; tyrants are not prone to disgorge what they have once devoured. And who was to control Nebuchadnezzar? They had no arms, no property, no correspondence; all their efforts must have terminated in enlarged sufferings and increased distress. But with God all things are possible: the signal is given, the great trumpet is blown, the proclamation is issued. "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia: Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord; and whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold." Thus they gained their freedom; the dispersed assembled together, they returned to Judea, and there they adored the God of their fathers. In consequence of this edict many thousands returned unto Zerubbabel; they all appeared before God in Zion, and came to worship at Jerusalem. Let us then, in subsequent exercises, contemplate the grandeur of the gospel; its dispensation; the condition of those whom it addresses; its attraction, and the effect of its influence.

Feb. 17.—*A dispensation of the gospel.* I Cor. ix. 17.

HERE we have for our contemplation "a dispensation of the gospel." The great trumpet is to be "blown." For what use would a trumpet be otherwise? And what is the reasoning of the apostle? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher!" And "when the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Our Saviour himself, when on earth, preached personally; "he preached peace to them that were far off and to them that were nigh." By this it was that, in the beginning of the gospel, nations were converted from Paganism to Christianity.

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By this, at the time of the Reformation, men were converted from Popery to Protestantism. What did Knox in Scotland? And thus has it been among us. More than a century ago, a band of men, whose hearts the Lord had touched, went forth to preach the everlasting gospel. Wherever they found a place or a congregation, they preached, and, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" It is quite impossible now to calculate how great and extensive has been the influence of their labours. And how is it now? Take the members of a Christian church: you will find most of them called to God by the instrumentality of a preached gospel. One would say, "Ah, sir, you cannot imagine what a poor, dead, stupid creature I was as to all the things of God, till I heard a sermon which came to me like a clap of thunder, and led me to cry, What must I do to be saved?" A second would say, "You cannot imagine what a proud, self-righteous Pharisee I was, till I heard a sermon which, like a scythe, mowed down all my hopes, and left me at the foot of the cross, saying, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." But *who* is to blow this trumpet? Men, and not angels. There is a difference between the administration of the law and the dispensation of the gospel. The law was "ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator." One produced the darkness, another shook the mountain, another rolled the thunders, another inscribed the law on tables of stone, &c. "But unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," that is, the economy of the gospel. In reading the Acts of the Apostles we shall find that it was so all along. Though an angel appeared to Cornelius, it was only to tell him to send for Peter, who would instruct him in all that was necessary. An angel was employed to deliver Peter and John from prison. What a fine preacher he would have been had he gone among the people! But no; he said to the apostles, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." We can never sufficiently admire the wisdom of God in this arrangement. Had angels been employed to preach the gospel, their greatness would have made us afraid; we should have been dazzled and overawed. But, now that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power appears to be of God. The victory achieved over the proud foe appears more humbling now that he "stills the enemy and the avenger, by ordaining strength out of the

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mouths of babes and sucklings." Angels could not speak to us from experience, but, as some indeed do, by mere rote. They know nothing of godly sorrow for sin, or of the exercise of Christ for pardon. They are ignorant of the Christian warfare; they could not weep or sympathize with us in their addresses; the thing could not go from heart to heart as it is among us now.

Feb. 18.—*Ready to perish.* Isa. xxvii. 13.

HERE we have the condition of those to whom the gospel is addressed. "Outcasts," and "ready to perish." This is the figure; and what is the fact? "Remember," says Paul, "that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." It speaks of them as "sitting in darkness," as being "in the region of the shadow of death." One thing is allowed on all hands:—"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Happiness does not result from the excellence of the object possessed, but from its adaptation to the feelings of the persons possessing it. Nothing will make us happy which does not relieve our wants, and fulfil our hopes, and satisfy our desires. Oh, say some, we are not heathens: but let these turn to Scripture, and they will find that they are "all by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "In us," says the apostle, "that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing." We are cursed because we have not "continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "There is but a step between us and death." Is a sheep ready to perish in the midst of wolves? Is a diseased man ready to perish, who from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot is covered with wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores? Is a traveller ready to perish who is fast asleep on the edge of one of the highest cliffs of Dover? Is a criminal ready to perish on whom the judge has pronounced sentence, and who is left for execution to-morrow? Is an infant ready to perish that is cast out into the open field on the day that it is born, and whom there is no eye to pity, none to have compassion? But none of these are so ready to perish as sinners under the gospel are; the destruction of none of these is so great as their perdition, and from this state they are by no means able to help themselves. No hope of relief can be found but in the

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boundless grace of God. And why should they be ashamed that their state should be known? It is *desirable* that they should know it; to this, their condition, the whole gospel refers, and on this the whole of it is founded. It is also *necessary* that they should know it, else the gospel will be a repulsive system to them. It will be like offering alms to the wealthy, or announcing liberty to those who are free, or entering a house to couch the eye of a man who can see,—unless they choose to strip the gospel of its fine character, as suited to sinners; unless, as some have done, they would reduce the gospel to a system of moral ethics. But is such a meagre representation the gospel? Does it come up to this representation?—“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Or does it come up to this language?—“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Feb. 19.—*They shall come which were ready to perish.*

Isa. xxvii. 13.

WE have here the attraction the gospel shall exert. Whatever knowledge the heathen had, they were utterly unable to carry it into effect, both for want of evidence and authority. None of them could speak in the name of that God who calleth the things that are not as though they were. Hence we find Plato complaining that he was unable, by all his instructions, to bring over the inhabitants of a single village. But if we go to Thessalonica, to Corinth, to Colosse, to Ephesus, and survey the character of the inhabitants before they received the gospel, it is largely described by the apostle, and we cannot suppose that the devil himself could make or wish them worse. Yet the apostle stands forth and says, “Such were some of you;” “ye were sometimes far off;” you “were dead in trespasses and sins;” but “you hath he quickened;” “instead of the thorn came up the fir-tree; and instead of the brier came up the myrtle-tree.” “Our gospel came unto you, not in word only, but in power also;” “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” Accordingly, the gospel is expressed evermore by images which indicate its efficacy. It is called the “rod” of God’s power—a “hammer” to break in pieces—a “two-edged sword”—“leaven”

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which commences its operations in the centre, and extends them to the circumference until the whole is leavened—"seed" which, though it looks dead, yet fills the earth with its fruit, thirty, sixty an hundredfold. This success God himself has insured, or we could not reckon upon it. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." The gospel never leaves people as it finds them: it enlightens their understanding; it prevails on their wills; it purifies their affections; it makes them new creatures. How can we honour the gospel so much as by showing what it can do? What has the gospel done for multitudes? If they are as proud, and covetous, and revengeful, after hearing the gospel, as they were before hearing it, where is the change? Where is the conversion? In the passage before us the trumpet is blown, but it is heard,—it is answered:—they "come." *Sow* do they come? "With weeping and with supplication;" they come eagerly, hastening, running, flying like doves to their windows when they behold the approaching storm. 'Prom *whence* do they come? From the dark dens of ignorance—from the lurking-holes of hypocrisy—from the false refuges of pharisaism—from the service of sin—from the bondage of Satan. *To whom* do they come? "To whom coming as unto a living stone," "to him shall men come." He is the only resource; and he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." What is faith, what is religion, but the soul in motion to him and negotiating all its affairs with him?

Feb. 20.—*But they made light of it.* Matt. xxii. 5.

THE charge here made is that of making light of the provision and invitation of the gospel. The Jews did, and they well deserved the destruction it brought upon them. But is this applicable to us? Why not? There are four proofs which will substantiate the charge. The first will be taken from our *thoughts*. The thoughts are the first-born of the mind, and they always cling to their object as the bees to the hive, and for the

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very same reason,—because there they find the honey. “Can a woman forget her sucking child?” “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?” “Where the carcass is,” says the Saviour, “there will the eagles be gathered together.” But now, what a man makes light of he thinks very little of. Let us ask, then, how does this subject engage our hearts? Many persons know that it rarely ever engages them; they know that it never engages them spontaneously, but only by external presentation, and they know, too, that when it does enter them, it is not cherished and entertained; and therefore, like a guest who feels that he is not welcome, he soon looks to the door. The second proof is to be taken from our *words*. That which we make much of we shall speak much of, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Hear how those who value these things, instead of “making light” of them, are thus described by inspiration. “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.” Now, on the other hand, take men who “mind earthly things.” Suppose it be money: such persons, like Peter’s fish, have money in their mouths; or, if it be the honour which cometh from men, they want nothing to excite them to enlarge. Oh, they seize the opportunity; they are at home here. But they never converse of “the things of the Spirit;” that is, of their own accord; that is, unless they have some purpose to answer; that is, never without irksomeness. Other company is much more relished than the company of those who know nothing “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” The third proof may be taken from our *actions*. Those make light of a thing who take no pains and make no sacrifices in order to secure it. And is not this the case here? The man spoken of in the gospel, who found treasure hid in a field, did not “make light” of this thing, for he immediately went, and sold all that he had, and bought it. What are we ready to part with for this purpose? The pride of our reason—our self-righteousness—the possession of the world—the pleasures of sin? The best proof will be derived from our *anxieties*. It is well known that what we highly prize we shall always recommend, and be greatly concerned to make those we love partake of the same. Now, can our relations or our friends bear

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witness that we have urged upon them the care of the soul as the “one thing needful” in all our intercourse with them? Can they bear witness that we have sought to induce them to attend to religion? Have we prayed with them, and for them? Have we admonished them? Have we been anxious that they should fee “renewed in the spirit of their mind”?

Feb. 21.—*But they made light of it.* Matt. xxii. 5.

THERE are four causes which lead numbers to make light of the gospel provision and invitation. First, *ignorance*. Hear what the Scripture says of this:—“If our gospel,” says the apostle, “be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;” that is, it follows that they will be lost hereafter; and it proves that they are in a perishing condition already. There is an ignorance which is *unavoidable*. This does extenuate and excuse; but these guests could not plead this ignorance, because a succession of messengers had been sent to them. There is also an ignorance which arises, *not from the want of means*, but *the want of improving* them. “My people,” says God, “do not consider.” Now, ignorance never excuses, where knowledge is attainable. And yet there are many who are *willingly* ignorant: they turn away their ears from hearing God; they close their eyes. And therefore the Saviour says, “Had I not come and done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.” Another cause is *insensibility*. There are many who do not feel their need of these things: they are not “poor in spirit;” they do not “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” “Now,” says Solomon, “the full soul loathes the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” “They that are whole,” says the Saviour, “need not the physician,” and therefore they are not disposed to repair to him. They may not oppose him, especially if he happen to be popular in their neighbourhood; yea, they may even recommend to him some who are very ill; but it is obvious that they will not value him on their own account. But it is otherwise with the sick. The person they want is not the merchant, the philosopher, the poet, the musician; but the man who can bring them “health and cure.” Another cause is *indisposition*. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject

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to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And the same may be said of the Saviour himself; men "will not have this man to reign over them." Even in the character of a Saviour, natural men do not love him. David speaks of some who "love his salvation." It is a fine expression, and ever to be remembered; but natural men, they do not love the *manner* of it, as it is free, and leaves us nothing to glory in before God; as it represents us, if wise, wise in another's wisdom; if righteous, righteous in another's righteousness; if strong, strong in another's strength; if rich, rich in another's riches; and however moral we may be, if saved, saved in the same way with the chief of sinners. And they do not love the *nature* of this salvation, as it is heavenly and holy. His name was called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins. He "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The fourth cause is *worldly-mindedness*. This was the case here: they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, and the other to his merchandise.

Feb. 22.—*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* 1 John v. 4.

"BE of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Thus did our Lord assure to his disciples the victory over the world, as if he had said, I have found it from the beginning to be an enemy, but it has not conquered me and it shall not conquer you; I have overcome it for you, and, because I have overcome, you shall overcome also; and, "because I live, ye shall live also." But what is the Christian's victory now over the world? It is not fleeing from the world,—fleeing is not fighting,—but it is their abiding in the situation and calling in which they are placed by God; discharging with diligence and zeal the duties pertaining to them; bearing with patience, and firmness, and privation, the trials incident to them; avoiding the snares and the corruptions that are inherent in them; resisting the temptations belonging to them, and using all the opportunities afforded them to "do good as they have opportunity unto all men," and to "serve their generation according to the will of God." It is to be undismayed by the frowns of their adversaries, and to pursue their work however

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they may oppose, or threaten, or persecute. It is to be unswayed by their smiles, by their allurements, by their promises. It is to act independently of them, from conviction and disposition. It is not to be “conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind.” It is to dare to be singular, like Noah, in an ungodly world. It is to be able to say, with David, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I will keep the commandments of my God,” or with Joshua, “Choose this day whom ye will serve; but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” The man who thus lives overcomes the world; the man who thus lives, though he is in the world, is not of it; he is in the world as the soul is in the body,—in it, indeed, but not of it,—in it, but of another quality. And however busy this man may be, however much he may be engaged in the things and with the men of the world, yet such a man as this is not carried away by what the apostle calls “the cares of this world,” and he is not acted upon by what he calls “the spirit of the world.” He has received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God. But now let us notice *how the victory is achieved*:—“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” and by no other means is it possible to overcome. It is only by faith that the secret is manifested to the conscience that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.” It is faith that with a trumpet-voice says to the man, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but of the world.” It is faith alone that can loosen him from the dominion of things seen and temporal, by revealing to him the things that are not seen and eternal. It is this faith that not only brings heavenly grace within his view, but within his reach; and it enables him to say, “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever,”—when he can say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”

“When I can say my God is mine,
When I can feel his glories shine,
I tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”

Feb. 23.—*Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.*
2 Pet. i. 14.

HERE we have the Christian's present residence. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened," says Paul; and here Peter says, "I must put off this my tabernacle." By this tabernacle they mean the body. It is the same to the soul as a dwelling is to the inhabitant; but, you will observe, the apostles do not call it a palace, or a mansion, or even a house, but only a tabernacle. Paul was by craft a tent-maker; his hands, therefore, had been often employed in the construction of such residences as these. He well knew that a tent or a tabernacle had a roof but no foundation—was a temporary accommodation—a movable body, easily taken down, easily injured, easily destroyed. Ah! do what we will with these bodies of ours, they are really no better than tabernacles,—earthly tabernacles. Nurse them as we please, pamper them, as some do, dress them, idolize them, indulge them in every kind of luxury, after all, dust they are, and unto dust they will return. "Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and my age is as nothing before thee. Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." But let us now see how the apostles distinguish our souls from our bodies, and how they place them above our bodies. They speak as if our bodies did not even belong to our persons. Paul says, "We that are in this tabernacle;" and Peter here avails himself of the same allusion:—"I must put off this my tabernacle;" as if we could live and act without our bodies. This is possible, and the soul is the man, and the soul is the inhabitant that is in the body, but not of it; it is not of the same material, the same quality, the same origin. Do what we will we can never save the tabernacle, but the tenant may be saved; and surely it must be our wisdom to make its salvation our immediate and our main concern; and, therefore, our Saviour, who well knew the value of the soul, from the price of our redemption which he paid for it, meets us in all our worldly pursuits, and asks, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Yet there are many persons who have no more regard for their souls than if they had none, or as if they deemed them unworthy of one moment's thought. This is the case with them not only while they

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I've but often even when they die. They discover the same indifference then; they employ the physician; they call in the lawyer; they dispose of their substance; they arrange their funeral; they tell their survivors where, and how, and when, they choose to be buried: but not a word escapes them concerning their soul, and not one of their cruel relatives, or attendants in the room with them, dares to break this delusion and say to them, Have you, then, no soul? Is the soul provided for? Is your soul safe? After death is the judgment: and where will you be in the day of the Lord Jesus?

Feb. 24.—*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* 2 Cor. v. 4.

Now, from hence there are three things that may be remarked. The first is, that *the primitive Christians were men of just the same passions as we are.* We sometimes think they were a peculiar people, a superior kind of beings; at least, that they were strangers to all those feelings of ours which are fearful and wretched. No; they also were encompassed with infirmities. There was nature as well as grace in them; and, though God had made them holy, yet they felt the effects of guilt. Secondly, we may observe that *the fear of death does not shoviv any want of religion.* Dr. Conyers, one of the best of men, often used to say, "I am afraid to die, though I am not afraid of death." There is much in this to intimidate some. As Dr. Watts says,—

"The pains, the groans, and dying strife,
Fright our approaching souls away;
Still we shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay."

Why, this is easily accounted for: "no man," says the apostle, "ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherishethit." Nature can never be pleased with its own dissolution. We see the aversion there is to it even in birds and beasts, as well as in us, though they have no dread with regard to a future state. The fear of death is as natural to us as hunger, or thirst, or sleep; and we are no more accountable for it; the chief thing is, only to have it properly guided and regulated. Why, Adam, in his state of innocency, felt this fear of death; and, therefore, the

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menace was addressed to him:—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Unless he had feared death this would have been no threatening at all. And our Lord and Saviour, who had a sinless humanity, who knew no sin as well as did no sin, our Saviour himself thus feared; and, therefore, the apostle says, "He prayed unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared;" for he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Now, we can easily conceive that a man may be attached to a thing, may desire a thing, and not like the way by which it is gained. There is a man, we will suppose, who has a diseased limb, and the removal of it is essential to his recovery. What does the man want? Not amputation, you may be sure, but recovery. And can we question his desire for the one because he shrinks from the other? No; he longs for the cure, and only dreads the operation. A man may have a family, a lovely and attractive family, in America; he may long to be with them, but when he comes down and sees the Atlantic he may shudder. I do not question his wishing to be with them because he dreads the sea. Dr. Watts has also admirably expressed this in one of his hymns:—

"Oh, could we make these doubts remove,
 These gloomy doubts that rise,
 And see the Canaan that we love,
 "With unbeckoned eyes!"

(Ah! "the Canaan that we love." We may love Canaan, we may long to be there, while we shudder at Jordan's stream that rolls between?)

Thirdly, *We should endeavour to rise above these feelings*; for we must remember that death, after all, is the only way by which we can enter into life. It is the only—and, we may be assured, the right—way to the city of habitation. What is impossible to nature may be possible to grace; we may, therefore, be raised above the depressing fear of death. And in order to this, we should endeavour to view death as much as possible under every sort of representation given of it in the Scripture. Death to the believer is falling asleep in Jesus—going home—departing to be with him, which is far better. Our minds should dwell, not upon what is forbidding, but upon what is beyond:—

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand, dressed in living green.”

Let us keep our eyes on that blessed state,—Immanuel’s land,—and think less of the shadow of death which is to usher us into it. If it be a dark valley, it is a short one, and there is One who has engaged to go with us through it, whose rod and whose staff shall comfort us.

Feb. 25.—*Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.* Ps. ciii. 1.

THERE are three things which should be regarded by us as a stimulus to gratitude. The first is *to dwell upon the blessings we have received*. We are affected by mercies; and it is well we are. We should dwell upon the suitability of them,—their importance and value. Take the blessing of deliverance from all our spiritual enemies. Let us ask ourselves, What would have been the consequence if I had been left a victim of sin, or of the world, or death, or the grave? What do I owe to that Saviour who rescued me? The second is *to get an increasing sense of our own unworthiness*. We shall always find that gratitude deepens humility, and that proud people are ungrateful for whatever is done for them: they consider it as only doing a duty, not conferring a favour. What reward have their benefactors? But take a man who is humble, and he will in the same proportion be thankful. When we are convinced that we are unworthy of all God’s mercies, when we look not only to years of unregeneracy, but to years of conversion,—to years since we have known God, or rather “been known of him,”—what will be our language? “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!” Then, Thirdly, We should be greatly concerned to *get an assurance of our own interest in the blessedness of the Lord*. Yes, it will touch the spring of all our feelings and affections, when we can say, with David, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication;” or, as he says in the eighteenth Psalm, “I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” Thus expressing his property in God nine times in one verse; and no wonder, therefore, that he should say, “I love thee, O

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Lord." It was thus that Peter, joining himself with the Christians of his day, could say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Thus, therefore, we should walk before him "in newness of life;" thus we should ask continually, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Thus by his mercies we should "present our bodies a living sacrifice." Oh! it well becomes Christians to be thankful. It is a pleasant thing to give thanks to the Lord. This is a part of heaven; it is the beginning of heaven, and that which will endure forever. The other parts of our religion will soon cease; faith will be swallowed up in sight, hope in fruition; there will be nothing for repentance when we are freed from all our evils; there will be no room for prayer when we are "filled with all the fulness of God:"

"Then shall we see, and hear, and know
All we desired and wish'd below,
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

Feb. 26.—*They all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Luke xiv. 18—20.*

OBSERVE, these characters do not flatly and positively refuse; they were ashamed to do this. Sin is always a shameful business, and men do not love to plead for it openly, till they have dressed it up in some false notion or name. "Oh," they will say, "covetousness is a very bad thing, but we are to lay up for the children." "Oh," they will say, "pride is an abominable thing, but we are to show a proper spirit." And so of the rest. Observe, also, that all these excuses were derived from things that were lawful,—yes, lawful in themselves; and it is by these things lawful in themselves that thousands perish. The last step of a

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virtue and the first step of a vice, are contiguous. The space which separates between a duty and a sin is often no more than a hair's-breadth. At this barrier the enemy takes his station, that when he finds us coming to the verge of permission, he may as easily as he can, draw us over, and induce us to transgress. So the first says, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must needs go and view it." Would it not have been wiser to have seen it before he bought it? But men are always fools when they plead for irreligion. The second says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Why did he not prove them before he bought them? Suppose, after he had bought them, he should find them blind, and lame, and diseased: what would he have done then? The third is bolder still:—"I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Why could he not have come? Could he not have brought his wife along with him? Was there not room enough for them both? Would she not have been as welcome as himself? Or was the lady indisposed to go? This is not likely; women are always more inclined to religion than the men. But, if this had been the case, he should have gone alone. Oh, how often are we injured and ruined by improper regard to our fellow-creatures, our friends, our relations! There are persons who suppose that error may destroy; but they forget that truth may destroy also, and that we read that the gospel itself may become "the savour of death unto death." They know that the devil can damn them, but they forget that a child can do the same, or a mother, or a father, and that our Saviour has said, "He that loveth father, or mother, or son, or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me." Because Felix saw that it pleased the Jews, he left Paul bound. Because Herod saw that his murdering James pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also. The young man in the gospel was humble and inquiring, and gained the Saviour's affections; but he went away sorrowful, "for he was very rich." The seed sown among the thorns sprang up in time; but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choked it, and it became unfruitful.

Feb. 27.—*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.* 2 Cor. v. 4.

AND burdened with what? How numberless are the evils under which believers groan, and by which they are pressed down to the ground! It would be endless to particularize them, but we may arrange them under two classes. First, *Those evils which Christians endure in common with their fellow-creatures.* "For man," says Job, "is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Secondly, The burdens of the Christian comprehend *those painful things that are peculiar to themselves*,—the persecutions for Christ's sake which they experience from the world, *the temptations of Satan*, and, above all, they groan, being burdened *with their sins*. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." At the beginning of the Christian life, we are enabled, by application to the blood of sprinkling, to have the "conscience cleansed from dead works to serve the living God," and to enter into rest with regard to justification; but then, after this, in the remains of them, sin continues to be burdensome to the Christian all through life, and will be increasingly burdensome in proportion as he is increasingly holy. Paul was a singular sufferer, but he did not speak of any of his sufferings as he did of this,—the sin that was still dwelling in him; that when he would do good evil was present with him; and how to perform that which was good he found not, and therefore he says, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Christians therefore groan often under moral infirmities. While the people of the world sneer at them as if they were licentious, as if they were always ready to plead for sin, Christians groan under the burden of those infirmities which their adversaries never feel as sins at all. You may lay any heavy load upon a dead man, and he does not feel the burden; you may drive a sword through his body, and he will neither move nor cry; but a living body feels the least pressure, and a mote in the eye will make the sufferer wretched for the time. So it is with the Christian. Oh, there is enough here to induce Christians to groan, being burdened! It is said of that beautiful bird, the bird of paradise, that being once caught and caged it never leaves off sighing till it is set

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free. That bird is the Christian; he never leaves off sighing till he enters the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Feb. 28.—*Se will joy over thee with singing.* Zeph. iii. 17.

OBSERVE, here is not only joy felt, but it makes itself known. For this singing (what a thought! God singing over his people!) may be heard, and it is intended to be heard, and intended to be heard by *themselves*. God would have them, like Enoch, have the testimony of faith with them. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.” How often he says to the soul, “I am thy salvation”! Alone, in the house of God, in affliction, in the valley of the shadow of death,—with regard to all these, how often have Christians said,—

“Oh! what immortal joys I felt,
And raptures all divine;
When Jesus told me I was his,
And my Beloved mine!”

And God designs that his singing over his people should be heard by *the world at large*. Therefore by the prophet Isaiah he says, “Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.” How often has he made a visible distinction between them and others in the dispensation of his providence! as we see in the case of Noah in the deluge, and Lot in the overthrow of Sodom, and of the Israelites in the plagues of Egypt. And if his people are allowed in public calamities to suffer with others, they do not suffer like others, for he can indemnify them by inward supports and by eternal remuneration. But he causes this to be known to others by the dispensations of his grace as well as his providence. We know how high the godly stand in the conviction and esteem of the wicked. In company they may join in the laugh and mockery against them; but oh! when we witness them when they are alone, and when they think on that eternity on the borders of which they must know they continually stand, how often do we find them saying, with Balaam, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” And

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if the wicked do not choose to hear their God making declarations of his love to them now in life,—if they choose to pass through life deceived,—another world will soon undeceive them, for “then will he return to discern between the righteous and the wicked,—between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.” Wherefore, if God thus delights in his people, let others be careful how they oppose or injure them; for he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of God’s eye, that is, the tenderest part of the tenderest of all beings. Who would strike the child of a giant whilst he was standing by? Who would strike a king’s servant whilst he was present? Let men take eare what they do with regard to God’s children. He has bent his bow and made ready his arrow to shoot at the persecutors. On the other hand, they are so dear to him, that all that is done for them he considers as done for himself. He says, “He that receiveth you receiveth me.” “Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me.” And let us be followers of God as dear children; let us judge according to God’s judgment, and let us regulate our conduct by God’s conduct. In our eyes, let a vile person be contemned; but let us honour them that fear the Lord, whatever their external circumstances may be. Let us say, with David, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, of them that keep thy precepts; the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in whom is all my delight.”

Feb. 29.—*This is love, that we walk after his commandments.*
2 John 6.

WHILE God is the Father of his people, he is also their Master. He is good to them, but his goodness does not deprive him of his authority. He maintains this inviolable, even for their own welfare, and he has therefore given us not only exceeding great and precious promises, but commands; and our apostle says, “This is love;”—that is, the effect, the experience, the evidence of love:—“that we walk after his commandments.” This fruit of love, according to our apostle, bears two characteristics. First, He reminds us that it is *practical*, consisting in nothing less than walking. In Scripture you will observe that walking never refers to a single action, but to our conduct at large. “And herein,” says the apostle, “is love.” Not that we read, that we

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hear that we think his commandments, that we profess them, that we recommend them; but herein “is love, that we walk after his commandments.” Let us be assured of this,—that every thing else, however valuable, in connection with this, will be found vain without it. “Love,” says John, “not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” “If ye know these things,” says our Saviour, “happy are ye if ye do them.” Again, says our Saviour, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Yea, and aain, (and nothing can be more awful than this:)—“Many will say to me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” So that even endowments and exertion will not be substitutes for obedience: if the man who prophesies does not pray—if he who speaks in other tongues does not glorify God in his own—if he who performs miracles is also a worker of iniquity, he shall have his portion with the devil and his angels. Secondly, The other characteristic is, that it is *prescribed* as well as practical. Walking shows that religion is not a speculation, a notion, a pretence; for we are not merely to walk, but we are to “walk after his commandments;” not after the course of this world, not according to the lusts of men, not according to the imagination of our hearts, but to “walk after his commandments.” We may do many things which God has never enjoined, and he may pardon these; but he only rewards obedience, and obedience always and invariably regards a rule—a law. And he has told us what he requires of us; he has shown us what is good; we have it in his Word—his will; and therefore to this we are to appeal. Not to the decrees of councils, not to the creeds of men, but to the Scriptures. What saith the Scripture? should be the only inquiry with us. Every thing in religion that is destitute of the sanction of his authority is unbinding ou the conscience. It is of the traditions of men, it is of will-worship, concerning which he will by-and-by say, “Who hath required this at your hands?” “As many as walk according unto this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.”

Mar. 1.—*Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face.* 1 Thess. iii. 10.

HERE we perceive the desirableness and advantage of personal intercourse and communion among Christians. How pleasing is it for Christians to realize these after long separation and absence!—especially to meet after such trying circumstances and perilous events as occurred in the experience of the apostle! And Christians are still exposed to imminent dangers. We stand in jeopardy every hour. Oh, how delightful it must have been for the apostle to have met again those whom he so dearly loved; after the perils among robbers, perils by sea and land; after his shipwrecks and manifold tribulations! What gushings of feeling, what eagerness of words, what tears, what joys, what acknowledgments! Thus Jacob and Joseph met after twenty years' absence. How precious, too, is this intercourse among Christians in seasons of affliction and trouble! The face of a Christian friend, in such seasons, has appeared like the face of an angel. And how delightful it is when Christians meet in the sanctuary, there to mingle their songs and their supplications together in the exercises of devotion! And how blessed will it be to meet in heaven at last! There will the fellowship of the saints be complete and permanent. Here, how short in duration, how liable to interruption, have been the sweetest and the most protracted seasons of communion we have enjoyed on earth! But there their joy will be full and undisturbed. Yes, the saints will rejoice to see each other's faces in heaven; for we cannot doubt of there being a mutual recognition of each other there. "I am fully persuaded," says Baxter, "that I shall love my friends in heaven, and therefore know them; and this principally binds me to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them more, nor, therefore, love them after death, I should love them comparatively little, as I do all other transient things; but now I delight in conversing with them, as believing I shall commune with them forever." So did Paul; for, said he, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." But how different will be the meeting of the saints on earth, to seeing each other face to face in glory! Here the most spiritually-minded Christian is the

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subject of great imperfection. They mistake each other, and offences will come. They have much to explain, much to forgive; but then they will be without fault before the throne of God and the Lamb. Here we meet in circumstances of trouble, affliction and grief; but there nothing is felt but joy and gladness, nothing heard but thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Here we meet to part again, but there parting will be known no more.

Mar. 2.—*That I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.* Rom. i. 12.

THERE is no such thing as independence. All are needful, all are useful. We are not only one body in Christ, but “every one also members one of another.” “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” Man is designed and formed for society. His faculties, inclinations, and exigencies all urge him to associate. In his natural state he loves sinful society; in his renewed state he loves the society of the godly. Many things may often keep the partakers of divine grace asunder; but, being let go, they go to their own company, for each of them can say, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.” No; it is not good for man to be alone, nor is it good for the Christian to be alone. Bunyan knew this; he has no’ solitary pilgrim. Though Christian began his journey alone, he soon enjoyed a fellow-traveller, and Hopeful was found to be his companion when Faithful was removed. Love delights in the presence of its object; and, as “iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” Religion, so far from destroying the social principle, sanctifies and regulates and strengthens it. Like attracts like; and, when we become godly, our longing is for godly association. Yea, we “choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Communion with saints falls in With our new views, and hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows. These are now our fellow-learners and fellow-labourers, fellow-travellers and fellow-warriors. And Christians feel themselves to be thus united to each other. Their principles lead them to “re-

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joyce with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep;” and, instead of envying and hating one another for their successes and endowments and comforts, they glorify God on each other’s behalf. They feel it to be their highest privilege to guard each other’s reputation, explore and supply each other’s wants, soothe each other’s sorrows, and soften each other’s cares, being all partakers of the same “common salvation,” and realizing that they “are all one in Christ Jesus.” Every disadvantage is compensated for; thus,—

“They share each other’s woes,
Their mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.”

Mar. 3.—*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Heb. iv. 16.

WE are to come to this throne *boldly*. But what can this boldness be? It is expounded by the objects for which we are to approach him,—namely, “mercy and grace;” for, if we come to the throne of grace sensible of our need of mercy and grace, the boldness can only be the boldness of *penitence*;—the boldness which is becoming those who know that they have no claim upon the Giver, whose language therefore must be, “God be gracious”—“God be merciful to me, a sinner.” We may consider this boldness:—First, *As opposed to that despair which very naturally arises from the conviction of sin.* When a sinner is awakened and enlightened to see and reflect upon his character and condition, he must feel his need of Strong consolation at the thought of entering into the presence of a Being so great and glorious, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, “and who can as righteously as easily destroy him.” Dare I approach? and shall I succeed if I do? This is his experience; and to meet this the Saviour says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” and “him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.” To encourage such an approach, the Scripture places before us a number of persons, none of whom could possibly have any claim upon the Giver. We have a Manasseh, who sinned away all the advantages of a pious

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education, and became an idolater, a necromancer, a persecutor, and a murderer of the innocent and the righteous, and who made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with blood. We have the Corinthians, of whom the apostles give such an infamous character that Satan could not have made or wished them to have been worse than they were. "But," says he, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified as by the Spirit of our God." And the Apostle Paul, referring to himself, says, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy;" as much as to say, "None should despair:—you cannot, for I have found mercy." Then, Secondly, We may view it in opposition to the *bondage of Judaism*. God was much less accessible under the former dispensation than under the present economy. While God was upon Sinai, the Israelites were not suffered to approach without imperilling their lives. Into the holy of holies, where God dwelt between cherubims, only one person in the whole nation was allowed to enter, and he as high-priest was to go only once a year, and then stay there but a few minutes. God revealed himself then more as a sovereign than as the "Father of mercies" and "God of all grace;" and the disposition of the worshipper partook of the nature of the dispensation itself in a measure. "Therefore," says the apostle, "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from the servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Such is the difference, says he, between the Jew and the real Christian. "Even so we when we were children in bondage under the elements of the world; but, when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father; therefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and then an heir of God through Christ." Let us approach our Father's throne at all times. Nothing is too little to bring before him, for we are encouraged "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto God."

Mar. 4.—*In the year king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.* Isa. vi. 1.

KINGS, as well as meaner men, die, and all their greatness is enshrined in the tomb. Vanity and meanness are inscribed upon every thing human. Death is always a very important and affecting event in life; but by the frequency of the occurrence it has become very familiar, and loses much of its influence; and there are few things that excite so little attention. This was noticed and lamented so early as Job's days, by Eliphaz, who said, "They are destroyed from morning to evening; they perish forever without any regarding it." Yet surely this insensibility" cannot be universal; surely death hath some kind of power to arrest the attention of the most thoughtless. And what does it say? "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." We see the universality of the ravages of death; that death is the "way of all the earth;" that "in this warfare there is no discharge." And should not the living, who know that they shall die, bring home the inevitable destination to themselves, individually reflect, and say, "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living"? It is the end of all men, and all men ought to lay it to heart. We see how little human greatness is. There is in human grandeur a comparative reality, and it has its uses and its claims in the present state; and nature and providence conduce to the production of it, and the Scripture commands us to respect it always,—to render "honour to whom honour is due, and fear to whom fear." But these often regard the office rather than the men. "I said ye are gods, but ye shall all die like men, and fall like one of the princes." "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returns to the earth: in that very day his thoughts perish." Why, then, should those in the superior ranks of life despise others? And why should others ever envy them? Is their strength the strength of stones? Are their bones brass? Are they not made of the same clay with others? Are they not subjected to the same infirmities, exposed to the same accidents and

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diseases? Are they not inheritors of the same mortality? And are they not hastening to say "to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and sister"? Ah! says one,—

"Whene'er I feel my virtues fail,
And my ambitious thoughts prevail,
I'll take a turn among the tombs,
And see whereto all glory comes."

"Ah!" says David, "I have seen the wicked great in power, spreading himself like a green bay-tree: he passed, and was not; I sought him, but he could not be found." Ah! what must death be to the great without religion? When Dr. Johnson was walking over the pleasure-grounds of Garrick, he said to him, "Ah, Davy, these are the things that make men unwilling to die!" Yes; what can make a man willing to resign the highest seat of power, and indulgence, and dignity? Suffering may indeed make him willing to depart, if he believes that there is no after-state; otherwise conscience, if it be alive, and if it be awake, must tell him that his present sufferings are only the beginnings of sorrow. It is only hope, a good hope through grace, therefore, that can effectually do it. This, indeed, can more than reconcile the possessor to the loss; this turns the loss even to a gain; and what, then, is a palace to "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"? What is an earthly crown compared with the "crown of glory that fadeth not away"? Therefore David, who was a very mighty monarch himself, who had risen surprisingly in life, who had so much to leave behind him more than any other man in his day, was more than willing to resign it; he prayed to be delivered from men of the world, who had their portion in this life; "for," said he, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Mar. 5.—*There is another Icing, one Jesus.* Acts xvii. 7.

WE have two epistles addressed to the Thessalonian believers, both of which raise them so high in our esteem, that we feel an interest in every thing which concerns them. We are here informed of the commencement of the church of Christ among them, by which, we need not say, is not meant the erection of a

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building, (for the early Christians had no place expressly appropriated to their worship till ages after,) nor the formation of a national establishment, (for it is well known that the civil power did not attempt to aid Christianity till the close of the third century.) But we mean, that by the coming of the gospel some were converted, and these formed themselves into a voluntary and holy communion, to assemble together in the name of Jesus, to attend on his appointments, and to “walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” “Now, when Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ.” What was the result? Perhaps there never was a sermon yet preached that was useful to all who heard it. Not excepting the sermon Paul preached at Athens? No; for though some “clave to him others mocked.” Nor even the sermon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were pricked to the heart, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” No; for some mocked, and said, “These men are filled with new wine.” “Some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude; and of the chief women not a few.” But others “rejected the counsel of God against themselves,” and commenced a furious persecution. Now, we only observe here the calumny under which they endeavoured to justify the vileness of their proceedings; they accused Paul and Silas of being disturbers of the public peace: but they themselves had excited the riot by urging on a number of vagabond miscreants, who were always ready for any confusion or evil work. Paul and Silas preached quietly in the synagogue, and wherever they came they admonished men to be quiet and to mind their own business; to love “one another; to follow peace with all men; to “do good unto all men.” And yet they are said to be those “who turned the world upside down.” They were also reproached as being opposed to the established government, and enemies to Caesar. They do things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that “there is another king, one Jesus.” Now, had this been true,

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the Jews were the last people in the world who should have urged the charge; for it was well known that they hated Cassar, that they hated his government, that they endeavoured the destruction of both, and that they were looking for a Messiah who, according to their views, would entirely accomplish it; while nothing could be more untrue and slanderous than the insinuation itself. Jesus had said to his disciples, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, as well as unto God the things that are God's;" and his servants, wherever they came, enforced civil obedience. Neither was it contrary to the decrees of Caesar to say that "there was another king, one Jesus." Though the emperor, with the senate, would not suffer any one to wear the name of king without their permission, yet many were allowed to retain the title as tributary, as under their dominion. Jesus was called a king by his followers in such a sense as could not be included in the design of the imperial interdiction. He was indeed a King, but not an earthly king; his kingdom was not of this world. Oh, when will rulers learn to distinguish things that differ? When will they see that there is nothing in the example or doctrine of Christ to countenance the deposing of princes, or the depriving them of any of their lawful prerogatives?—yea, that in proportion as men submit to his laws they must be the best of men, the most enlightened and the most faithful subjects; because they are subject, "not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake"? So we see that Paul and Silas, without contravening the designs of Cassar, could say, "There is another king, one Jesus."

Mar. 6.—*And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the loomb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Tea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* Luke xi. 27, 28.

THE Scriptures very aptly resemble the garden of Eden, where there was a fulness and freshness of every thing which could possibly be desired. In the Scriptures we have promises, consolations, encouragements, and cautions, &c.; all arranged in the most simple yet in the most interesting manner. We are shackled by no system, but have divine truth, mingled with history and

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biography. Children, we know, are more easily captivated by tales and facts; and man is but a child of greater growth. We have here, First, *The woman's exclamation*:—"A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice," &c. "We may notice the *cause* of her exclamation:—the speaking of Jesus. His word, though powerful, is not a hurricane, but harmony; not a hammer, breaking the block into small portions or pieces, but leaving each severed piece with its old nature and original properties; but the word of divine truth acts as the sun in melting down the stubbornness and obduracy of the heart. Observe, Secondly, *On what her admiration turned*. The cold-hearted Pharisee might have felt disposed to exclaim, "What irregularity! What a breach of order!" Jesus, however, was in no danger of being disconcerted in his discourse from any casual interruption, but was at all times fully at liberty to take advantage of every passing event; and we may readily imagine that, had such exclamations been made, he would have answered them by saying, "Let these hold their peace!" Then would "the very stones cry out against them." The woman doubtlessly felt the higher honour which was conferred on Mary. Really, when we think of this young creature, only about sixteen years of age, honoured as the mother of him who should be the Saviour of the world, we could not feel surprised had she become vain and proud. Nothing but the grace of God could have preserved her from it, after it was said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." With regard, then, to the woman's exclamation, we need not be surprised. Indeed, I am often astonished that the more vulgar and uninstructed among us do not more frequently break the rules of order and general discourse when they first behold the glory of God. Jesus, however, was anxious to inspire her with hope, by telling her, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that bear the word of God and keep it." On another occasion while Jesus was speaking, a whisper ran through the crowd,—"His mother and brethren stand without." They felt the high honour bestowed on them; but Jesus, "as his custom was," turned their attention from this subject by inquiring, "Who is my mother?" &c. "Whosoever *doeth* my will." The Saviour knew how to touch every spring and affection of his auditors. We may remark, in reference to the high admiration of the woman, that the admiration of every one, when he first receives a correct view of divine

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truth, is singularly high. Such a one cannot pass the fields, the houses, the cattle, of such as live “godly in Christ Jesus,” without pronouncing his benediction upon them. He envies all who share in the intercourse and communion of such. Many a Christian among us would gladly have welcomed Christ to his table: this is not allowed us; but we may enjoy him in our hearts by faith. Observe, Thirdly, *our Lord’s reply*:—“Rather, blessed are they that hear the word,” &c. In this reply there is an admission of the truth the woman declared, and a blessing pronounced on those who hear the word of God and keep it. Unfortunately many content themselves with hearing. The religion of too many consists not merely in the form of godliness, but also in the form of knowledge. It has generally been found that those who have been most in the habit of running from preacher to preacher have been the most ignorant and uninstructed. Let us remember that hearing is only instrumental to salvation. Our knowledge, in a great measure, is obtained by hearing. Sin first entered by the ear into the heart. Salvation is communicated through the same medium. Faith comes by hearing, but the promise is not made to hearing but to doing. “Hear, and your souls shall live.” Hence we are exhorted not to be “a hearer only but a doer of the word.” Otherwise the blessing will prove a curse. But if the word be ingrafted in our hearts, and dwell richly in our minds by faith, we shall have peace with God; peace in believing, peace in life, in death, and peace forever and ever. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

Mar. 7.—*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.* Col. iii. 11.

A POWERFUL writer has justly said that “there are some persons who have no essentials, and there are others who have no circumstantial, in their creed.” And this testimony is to a considerable extent true. There are many persons who seem altogether regardless of doctrinal sentiments and principles; all opinions are equally important with them. Then there are others who regard almost every thing as equally important in religion. They lay as much stress on the discipline of a church, as upon

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its doctrines; upon the mode of administering an ordinance, aa upon the ordinance itself; they plead as much for the "tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin," as for the "weightier matters of the law,"—"judgment, mercy, and faith:" while one of these parties has no room for faith, the other has no room for charity. The former are slaves of licentiousness, and the latter are the dupes of legality. We are, however, required to distinguish between things that differ; and to regulate our attention towards them by the degree of their qualities. Surely there are differences between a speculative opinion and a practical truth,—between the ornament of a bridge and the keystone of the arch. We should, therefore, be concerned to regulate our opinions and conduct by those parts of the Scriptures which diminish the value of inferior things in religion and magnify the importance of superior ones,—those Scriptures which inspire us with "everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace;" which lead to reconcile Christians to each other, and embattle them only against a common foe; so that, if they must strive, they may be led "to strive together for the faith once delivered to the saints." And such is the language of the apostle when he says, "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power;" and, again, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And, in this place, "Christ is all, and in all."

Mar. 8.—*Christ is all, and in all.* Col. iii. 11.

CHRIST is all in every thing. Such is the Greek, and so modern writers have rendered it; but in exemplifying this he "is all and in all" in the operations of divine grace. He "came into the world to save sinners;" this was his grand design, and he accomplished it himself. "He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him," and "there is salvation in no other;" "for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." No man cometh unto the Father but by him. Do we speak of *Redemption*? Here he is,—"All and in all." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "Ye are bought with a price," says the apostle; and this price is declared to be "the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." "In him, therefore, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness

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of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Speak we of *Justification*? "By him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." *tf* In the Lord therefore shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." The righteousness which they mention to God as their only plea, and to others as their only boast, is his righteousness; and there is not one of them but can say,—

"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."

Clothed in his righteousness and sprinkled with his blood, both the persons and services of believers are "accepted in the beloved," and he is "all and in all" in our *reconciliation* to God. "He is our peace." "He made peace by the blood of his cross." Hence it is said, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Speak we of *Renovation*? Here, too, he is "all and in all." If we are Christians indeed, we are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." It is the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Indeed, we are said to live in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and worship God in the Spirit; but it is the Spirit of Christ. He procured it for us upon the cross, and he communicates it to us from the throne, and it is expressly declared "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

"Tis by the merits of his death
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we."

Do we speak of *Final Perseverance*? We found our belief in this perseverance of the saints, upon their union with him who is the "same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" who is "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him," for "he ever liveth to make intercession for us;" who has said, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." So that, whatever enemies may assail them, or whatever fraud or force they may employ, in all these things they shall be "more than conquerors through

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him that loved us." Speak we of *Glorification*? Here he is "all and in all." It is he who is with them in the valley, and by his rod and staff comforts them there; that will receive them to glory, as to their departing spirits after death; and it is he that will raise them up again at the last day; "when he will change their vile bodies and fashion them like unto his own glorious body;" and it is he who will acknowledge them as his before an assembled world:—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." And "they shall be forever with the Lord."

Mar. 9.—*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*
2 Cor. iii. 17.

LIBERTY has always been highly prized, and can never be prized too highly. Well, we have civil liberty as Britons and spiritual liberty as Christians,—a liberty "unsung by poets, and by senators unpraised." Let us endeavour to exemplify our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. It will be found to include five things: First, Our freedom from *the exactions and impositions of men in religion*. Now, observe, we say in religion, because we do not here refer to civil things. We are willing to abide always by our Saviour's distinction:—"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Where religion is concerned, "The Lord is our King, the Lord is our law-giver; and, if any require us to believe or do what he has not enjoined us to believe or do, we are to obey God rather than man. The Saviour says, "Call no man master upon earth; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." When will men distinguish between civil governments and Christianity? The one regards us as citizens, the other as Christians. Secondly, This liberty includes a freedom from *the tyranny of Sin and Satan*. As saith the apostle, "What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin and become servants to God,—ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Thirdly, It includes a freedom from *the condemnation of the law*. "The soul that sinneth shall die;" and, saith the apostle, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And "who has ever done this?" Who

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has ever continued, from the first hour of reason, in avoiding every thing the law forbids and in doing every thing the law commands? But whose curse is it? The curse of Almighty God: and who knoweth the power of his anger? And the execution of this power is certain, unless—unless what? unless a surety be found; and such a Surety has been found, who has come forward and said, “Deliver them from going down to the pit;” I will give myself a ransom; I will bear their sins in my own body on the tree; I will suffer, “the just for the unjust, to bring them to God.” “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” No; he has “redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them.” Now, “therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Fourthly, It includes *freedom of access unto God*. “He is the greatest and best of Beings.” The effect of sin is to separate between us and God. When the angels sinned in heaven, they were immediately banished thence; when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they were driven out of it; and for sinning, the Jews were expelled from the land flowing with milk and honey. So many instances of actual fact show us—every one of them—what is the effect of sin:—that it is to separate between us and God, and to keep us from God. But now, through Christ Jesus, who is the Mediator between us and God, “we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” The believer has the liberty of approach unto God at all times, in every place, under all circumstances; they have full liberty to hold communion with him in the fields, by the way, in their ordinary business; they have full liberty to enter his house, to come to his table, to hang upon his arm, to recline upon his bosom, to call him their Lord and their God,—the strength of their heart and their portion forever. Fifthly, It includes *freedom to partake of and enjoy the good things or nature and providence*. Unscriptural self-denial and self-imposed severity, with regard to abstinence from the blessings of providence, have never promoted the mortification of sin or sanetification of heart. Here is our charter: the Scripture hath said, “Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

Mar. 10.—*Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.*
Gal. ii. 4.

CONCERNING which we have four admonitions to urge. First, *Hold fast this liberty* “wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage.” This is the admonition which the apostle himself gives to those Galatians. If Christians lose not their estate, they may lose some of its spirit; they may lose some of its enjoyments, and some of its noble profession; they may tremble when they should be bold, and temporize when they should be firm; they may conceal and cringe when they ought to be open as the day. “If reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. Secondly, *Do not abuse your liberty.* “Brethren,” says the apostle, “ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Remember, your liberty is not liberty to sin. Why, the thought of continuing in sin that grace may abound quite shocked the apostle, who said, “God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?” Thirdly, *Improve this liberty.* In one sense we cannot: its provisions surpass all expression and conception. But we mean we should make use of it and improve it. As to ourselves, we should be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” We should seek to be exemplary—to be useful—and to show forth the praises of Him “who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light,” and to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Fourthly, *Recommend this liberty* to others only. We should be careful to exemplify what we recommend. Christians should show what their religion has done for them and what it has done in them, and then they may expect and hope that it will do something by them, for then our address to others will be effectual; if we hold forth the word of life by our tempers and conduct, it will not be difficult to hold it forth by our lips. It is when we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, we may go and say to others, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

Mar. 11.—*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

THERE is something very interesting, very poetic, in this chapter, arising partly from *the principle of association*. For where is the person who has not in the mansions of the dead, and when attending the funeral solemnities of some near neighbour, or esteemed friend, or bereaved relation, heard the words, “Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”? And who can ever forget them? The most peculiar, and indescribable, and melancholy of all sounds, even in this vale of tears, is that made when the earth falls upon the little tenement of clay, and is followed with the declaration, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The interest of this chapter arises partly also from *the nature of the subject of which it treats*—a subject the most important—a subject in which we are all personally and deeply concerned—the resurrection of the dead. All will rise! “All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” But to the wicked it can hardly be considered an advantage to rise from a bad state, conscious that they will go to a worse; and therefore, because the wicked derive no benefit from the resurrection, the apostle does not consider it in reference to them at all; he views it only in connection with those who “sleep in Jesus,” and that not as a mere event, but as an inestimable privilege, arising from their union with him, and evidenced and pledged by his own resurrection from the dead. “Every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” “For if we believe,” says the apostle, “that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” How sublime are the words immediately preceding our motto! “Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” “Behold, I show you a mystery.” Now, this mystery regards all the men that shall be living when he shall come. What is to become of these? They die not, and

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therefore they cannot be raised from the dead. But the apostle says" they experience a change which is equivalent to dying,—such a change as was experienced by Enoch and Elijah. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mar. 12.—*Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

VICTORY supposes *warfare*. Various are the metaphorical characters under which Christians are held forth in the Scriptures of truth. Sometimes they are labourers in God's vineyard, sometimes they are travellers, sometimes they are merchants, sometimes they are racers, sometimes wrestlers; very frequently they are soldiers, good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and they fight not as one that beateth the air. The combat in which they are engaged is not an imaginary one, but a real, and a strenuous one too; but they have this incomparable advantage,—they war a good warfare, and in it "no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up against them they shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." Victory, we have said, supposes *warfare*, and so warfare supposes *enemies*. The enemies of the Christian are sin, the world, Satan, death, and the grave. Let us notice the *acquisition*. How is this victory obtained? In other cases winning a victory is gaining a victory; but here observe: First, *It is given*:—"Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is true we gain it, but he giveth it. It is true we fight, but it is equally true that he "causeth us to triumph." He not only furnishes the crown, but he also gives us the capacity by which we acquire

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it: therefore, Secondly, *It is dispensed through the mediation of the Lord Jesus*. From the beginning to the end of our salvation, the propriety, the expediency, the necessity of Jesus as a mediator is not for one moment left out. Is God well pleased with us? "In him," says God, "I am well pleased." Have we "exceeding great and precious promises"? They are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Are we redeemed? "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Are we heirs? "In him," says the apostle, "we have obtained the inheritance." Are we blessed? In him we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." In him "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." Thus we see that light is around us, but not a beam is transmitted through any other medium. All is goodness around us, but there is not a blessing that comes to us through any other channel. He is ALL, and in ALL. Not only is this victory; a divine donation, and dispensed through the mediation of the Son of God; but, Thirdly, *It is gradually exemplified and accomplished*. It is not said that he *will* give us the victory, though this is true, for that is already promised, but he *giveth* us the victory; and this is true, because it is gradually conferred and experienced. It is not the effect of an hour or a year. This victory is not achieved at once; it is carried on through the whole course of a believer's life, and is perfected in death, or rather in the resurrection of the dead. The apostle tells us that the good work is begun in us in the day of conviction; but he says, it is not performed "until the day of Jesus Christ." Already the Christian has many a time overcome, and he says, as David said, when he thinks of the victories, he has obtained, "By thee I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall." And this encourages believers, with regard to the future, to say, "Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." This victory, therefore, is both present and future: the future is the complete accomplishment; the present is the earnest in its gradual and partial accomplishment even now.

Mar. 13.—*Ye greatly rejoice.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

CHRISTIANS, then, are no strangers to joy; at least they ought not to be.

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“Who can have greater cause to sing—
 Who greater cause to bless—
 Than children of the heavenly King,
 Who Jesus Christ possess?”

Yea, they are commanded to “rejoice in him,” and to “rejoice in him always,” “for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” “The world knoweth us not,” says John. They consider the lives of Christians to be “madness,” as well as “their end to be without honour;” and they commonly consider this madness as not of the most lively and cheerful kind either, but as made up of mopishness and melancholy in which we must bid adieu to every thing like happiness. And woe to those professors of religion who confirm their prejudices by wearing long faces, by groaning and sighing as if they were always at funerals; by their disconsolation in all their troubles, and their murmurings and repinings, and their sinking under their cares, for by these things “the way of truth is evil spoken of,” as well as by their falls and miscarriages. Christians should be careful not only to be, but to appear, not only the heirs of this joy, but the subjects of it too, evermore confirming the divine testimony:—“Blessed are the people who are in such a case, yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.” If they are workers, they should be concerned to sing at their work in order to tell others that they do not find their employer a hard master, nor the work drudgery. Or, if they are travellers, they should go on their way singing,—“singing in the ways of the Lord,” as David has it,—to recommend them, and to say virtually to all around them, “Come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” Now we add another thing here. It may be conceded that religion does require us to give up the pleasures of sin (if they deserve the name of pleasures) and also the dissipations of the world; but then it substitutes other pleasures in their room infinitely superior to them. It only requires us to exchange the dunghill for the throne; the filthy puddle for the spring of living waters; the leeks, and garlic, and onions of Egypt, for the grapes of Canaan, and the produce of the land flowing with milk and honey. Oh! Christians may look the world in the face and say,—

“The men of *grace* have found
 Glory begun below;

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Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow,"

and *do* grow.

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields
Or walk the golden streets."

Mar. 14.—Wherein *ye greatly rejoice*. 1 Pet. i. 6.

IN what? This is the question, and it is answered,—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice.” What then are we to do with all this? Leaving other particulars, we only observe two things. First, *The Christian’s joy is not unfounded*. There is a sufficient ground for it. It is not the picture of imagination; it is not the vision of enthusiasm; it is not the dream of fanaticism; it is not the expectation of folly. No, it is well grounded. The whole of the religion of Jesus is a reasonable service; and the Christian is able to give “a reason for the hope that is in him;” at least he has a reason, though he may not always be able to express it properly and satisfactorily. Is there, then, not a cause? Let us therefore look back again on the preceding verses, and see whether there is not enough to excite and more than justify the Christian’s joy. Observe, Secondly, That as this joy is not groundless, so *it is founded principally upon spiritual and eternal things*. For all the things here referred to are of the same nature. There is not one thing here mentioned, however otherwise valuable, that appertains to his outward condition. Not that a Christian is to be regardless of these outward blessings and comforts. The Christian does not undervalue, he feels the importance of them as long as he is here. But, after all, what is time to eternity? What is the body to the soul?

“To thee we owe our life and friends,
Our health and safe abode;
Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God.”

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“Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And, with thee, rich, take what thou wilt away.”

Yes, the Christian can say,—

“Were I possessor of the earth,
And call'd the stars my own,
Without thy graces and thyself
I were a wretch undone.”

Let us, therefore, call to our remembrance, that when the disciples returned from a preaching-tour, and said to the Saviour, “Lord, the very devils are subject to us through thy word,” “I know it,” says he; “I saw Satan falling from heaven;” “but,” adds he, “in this rejoice not”—that is, in your external gifts and miraculous achievements—“in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Yes, “he is the freeman,” as Cowper says, “whom the truth makes free.” We are never to think that we prosper, unless our souls prosper; we are never to think that we are rich, unless we are “rich towards God;” never to think that we are blessed, unless we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;” or think that we are authorized greatly to rejoice, unless we are able to say with some humble hope, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, revealed in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, reserved through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” “Wherein,” says the apostle, addressing believers, “ye greatly rejoice.”

Mar. 15.—*If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*
Gen. xliii. 14.

PAUL speaks of “the comforts of love;” and he that does not know the comforts of love does not yet know the difference between a brute and a man. The highest pleasures of which our nature are susceptible are derived from social endearments. Ah! we may also say, and are not a thousand pangs derived from the same source? Do we not pay dearly for all our relative delights?

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Are they not expensively taxed with the pain of sympathy, the dread of separation, and the anguish of loss? It has been poetically imagined that the roses in Paradise had no thorns: however this may be, we well know that our roses are not without them, but, as Dr. Watts says,—

“Our roses grow on thorns, and honey hides a sting.”

Our possessions render us fearful and anxious, and expose us to loss; all through life in proportion to our affections will be our afflictions; and we shall always suffer more from friends than enemies,—from our own connections than from strangers. Alas! what sighs oppress the minds of many! There has gone to the house of God one who had formerly a fellow-Christian for a friend. They unbosomed themselves to each other in all their pleasures and griefs. There was but one heart, only it occupied two bosoms. And now he is exclaiming, “*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*” They strengthened each other’s hands in God, and found the truth of Solomon’s words:—“*Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*” “*Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel.*” Here is a Rachel: she was viewing the growing charms of her babe, and was saying, “*This same shall comfort us;*” but the blossom withered into dust, and she has been laying aside its little clothes with her own hand, and, sitting by the side of the drawers in the chamber, weeps for her child, and refuses to be comforted. The father viewed the son as his image, his representative, his heir; but he has been to the mouth of the grave, where he sighed, “*Thou destroyest the hope of man; childhood and youth are vanity.*” Here returns to her place the widow and the mother. She had a husband,—she had children; but she is now saying, “*Call me not Naomi: call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord brought me home again empty.*” Here is Martha at the feet of Jesus, saying, “*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*” And here is Jacob, shaking his gray hairs, and saying, “*Joseph is not, and Simeon is not: all these things are against me. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.*”

Mar. 16.—*How then can man be justified with God?*
Job xxv. 4.

LET us consider the question as implying a perfect negation. This is evidently what the speaker intended. "How then can man be justified with God?" as though it were an utter impossibility that it could be effected. And if we view man without any reference to the Lord Jesus, or the economy of grace, it is apparent that his justification with God is impossible. There are two things to be considered in a man,—his *sins* and his *services*,—his worst and his best things. Now, it is evident that he cannot be justified by his worst things; but it is equally apparent that he cannot be justified by his best, for his obedience is imperfect. If not defective in principle, it often is in spirit. There is such a mixture of motive, so much coldness of feeling, so much worldliness of thought and carnality of desire, that a Christian can never refer, with any composure or complacency, to that obedience to the will of God which he is enabled to render. We make our appeal to the provision which God has made in the gospel of his Son, in order to show that it is impossible for a man, without reference to Christ, to be justified before God. Never would Christ have descended from heaven, assumed our nature, submitted to poverty, experienced every indignity, endured inconceivable sufferings, and eventually bled and died on the cross, if man's justification with God could have been effected without his intervention. We may refer to the express decisions and testimonies of Scripture to illustrate that a man without Christ cannot be justified with God. And in relation to the doctrine of justification, it is evident that a man can gain a clear and satisfactory reply to the question of the text from no other quarter than the word of God; and its statements on this subject are precise, minute, full, and most satisfactory.

Mar. 17.—*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. v. 1.

THE apostle is here referring to a matter of unspeakable importance. The blessing of free justification and its consequent privileges will apply to the believer exclusively; and in his esteem, in his constant experience, it is a doctrine of the deepest

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interest and of incalculable value. Let us view the man who is justified with God in five respects. First, With regard to his *enemies*. They are very numerous, subtle, powerful, and malignant; but all their plans will be disconcerted, all their assaults will prove abortive and without avail. The man who is justified with God enjoys a sure, permanent, and immutable defence. Secondly, With regard to his *duties*. His services, however defective in themselves, are accepted in the Beloved. They rise to the throne of God like grateful offerings; and the mediation and atonement of Christ always render them acceptable. Besides, not only is the justified man accepted in the performance of duty, but he is aided also. He has divine power afforded that he may serve God appropriately; and, as his exigencies arise, so spiritual energy is imparted. Thirdly, With regard to his *enjoyments*. His tranquillity is abiding and divine. He realizes the sublimest happiness amidst all the fluctuations and distresses of the wilderness. His mercies are all sweetened by the conviction that they proceed from a God of love; and he can drink his wine or water "with a merry heart," because he is conscious that all his supplies flow from that beneficent Being who is his covenant God and Father, by virtue of the blood and intercession of Jesus Christ. Fourthly, With regard to his *trials*. Those trials may be numerous, diversified, often exceedingly severe, but the Christian knows that they are all desirable and indeed requisite; and he rejoices in the assurance that all his afflictions are sent by an indulgent Parent, who is acquainted with his case, who knows what he requires, and who appoints every trial and calamity for his benefit and happiness. The man who is justified knows that there is nothing that is penal connected with any of the trials he realizes. Lastly, With regard to *death*. The Christian may sometimes tremble when anticipating his mortality; but when his graces are in lively exercise he is all composure. The thought does not alarm him. He recognises in death a friend. Hence Dr. Gouge was accustomed to say, "I have two friends, Christ and death; Christ is my first friend, and death my second." This is the sentiment of the justified man.

Mar. 18.—*That day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

WE have here presented to our notice an awful period. It is not mentioned by name, but the apostle only calls it "that day." What day? "The day of death, when the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it"? Or the day of judgment? Doubtless the *day of judgment*. This is often in the Scriptures called "*that day*," in order to show us that it is a very important, a very remarkable, a very distinguished day. Therefore it is called "the *last day*," because it is to terminate the present system, and the angel will then "swear, by Him that liveth forever and ever, that there shall be time no longer." Hence also it is called "the *great day*," to signify that the magnitude of its proceedings is inexpressible, and because it is the day of final decision. It is a very solemn thing for a man to appear in an earthly court to be judged, and to stand before a human tribunal with his property, or his reputation, or his liberty, or his life, at stake; but here every thing is at stake, and forever. "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." "The heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left: then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; and then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." And are these things so? Surely such a period demands the most serious attention. The first Christians knew that, and they thought much of it. It was not necessary in addressing them to mention the period by name; they were looking for it, they were loving it, they were waiting for it, they were hastening towards it. In the scales of that day they weighed every interest; they made it the test by which they tried their riches, their honours, their treasures, and their anxieties too. Hence their temperance in all

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their worldly possessions and enjoyments:—"Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand." Hence their diligence in duty:—"The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Hence their freedom from envy and ill will:—"Grudge not one against another, brethren: behold, the judge standeth before the door." Hence the little impression made upon them by their trials: the "light affliction which was but for a moment was working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," while they "looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." In a word, "They walked by faith, not by sight;" that is, they could not see the day, but they believed it, and it influenced them just as if they could. The world that now is has an intimate and inseparable connection with that which is to come. It does not depend on us whether the present shall have this relation to the future. God has determined it, and it arises from the very nature of the case; it is the relation between a way and an end,—between "seed-time and harvest;" and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Let us ever think of this. "I paint for eternity," said the artist, to justify his attention and his accuracy. We too are all acting "for eternity;" and not a fictitious eternity, but a real one. We are reading, and hearing, and talking, and training, against "that day." Have we made provision for it? Alas! how many provide for a temporal who disregard an eternal futurity! They provide for a futurity that only may occur, and then overlook a futurity that WILL occur, and that MUST occur! The grand question is, What have we done against "that day," the certainty of which cannot be denied, the importance of which cannot be disputed, the approach of which no one can hinder, and in which we are to be not only spectators, but parties concerned? Is it our chief concern "to find mercy of the Lord in that day"—to be safe in "that day"—to be happy in "that day"—to be inheritors in "that day" of a new heaven and a new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness"?

Mar. 19.—A glorious church, *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.* Eph. v. 27.

THE church, when presented to the Saviour by himself, will be glorious. And is not his church glorious now? It is. It is not a glorious church indeed in the eyes of the world, for the world knoweth them not; they are often like their Lord, “despised and rejected of men;” but they are glorious in the eyes of the Lord. The Judge of all, even when he sees them “wandering in goat-skins and sheep-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented,” says, “Of them the world is not worthy.” We may turn to the language of God in one of the Psalms:—“Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.” What are the mountains of prey? Why, those empires that love war,—that live on the spoil or the prey. Nothing is so splendid in the view of carnal men as these mountains of prey. We see how the Assyrian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman empires were presented by God to Daniel. He saw them as “four great beasts coming up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear; and it raised itself up on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it; and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” But though the church is now “glorious,” and “more glorious than the mountains of prey,” yet *its glory is partially prevented and obscured* now. It is so by the *fewness of its numbers*. Here we can only see the Lord’s army in its recruiting state, or as learning its exercise, or as practising in small detachments. But when the whole shall be completed, oh, then may it well be said, “Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an

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army with banners?" Its glory is now partially prevented and obscured *by intermixtures*. The lilies are among the thorns; the tares are among the wheat. "Among my people," says God, "are found wicked men;" and now we very well know the few will often characterize the many, and the false will throw suspicion on the true, and the bad will serve to disgrace the good. "But then," says our Saviour, "the angels shall gather together out of his kingdom everything that offends;" and then he will cast them into a furnace of fire; "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It is now also partially prevented and obscured by their *outward condition*. They are now often poor; then shall they "possess all things." They are often despised now; then their very enemies will exclaim, "We fools counted their lives madness, and their end to be without honour; now are they numbered with the children of God, and their lot is among the saints." Now they are often oppressed; many rise over their heads; but "the righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning." Now they are judged, (how falsely judged often!) but then they will be the judges:—"What, know ye not that the saints will judge the world? Know ye not that saints shall judge angels?" Now they "groan, being burdened;" then they will be freed from the burden of the flesh, and those vile bodies shall be fashioned like the Saviour's own glorious body. Above all, the glory of the church is now partially prevented and obscured *by moral infirmities*. They are, indeed, made to differ from others, and from their former selves; but they are not yet fully sanctified. But the apostle tells the Colossians that they who have been "sometime alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present them holy and unblamable in his sight."

Mar. 20.—*He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.* Job. xxiii. 14.

WE are here assured that our afflictions are not *casual* or *accidental*. Nothing in any of our trials occurs by chance. With us there may be contingencies, seeing we are not acquainted with the plan to be developed and executed in the arrangements of an all-wise Providence; but all events are "determined by

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him who sees the end from the beginning, and who is working all things after the counsel of his own will." Nothing transpires without him. He strikes no random blows: his arrows never miss their object. He is performing the thing that is appointed for us; and the appointment is in all respects *perfectly equitable*. The Lord has not only a right to ordain, but in doing so he cannot pervert justice. He is not only too wise to err, but too good to be unkind. He who is bringing to pass the appointments of his providence so loved us as not to spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. And we are not only allowed but invited, yea, required, to cast all our cares on him, with the assurance that he careth for us. Let us take this principle with every allotment, with every circumstance of life, and say, "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" It is "the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." "I will cry unto God most high, unto God who performeth all things for me." It is also intimated that these afflictions are *not peculiar*. "Many such things are with him;" and when writing to the Thessalonians the apostle says, "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world." Providence will not in any case deviate from the treatment of all the other branches of the household of faith; "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." To which of the saints, in Scripture or history, can we turn in refutation of this decision:—"What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" But consider, these appointments of the rod are *remedial, and not penal*. They are corrections; and are inflicted, not by the sword of the Judge, but by the rod of a Father. Believers sometimes misapprehend them, and, fearful of their being messengers of justice, may say unto God, "Do not condemn me." But the apprehension is groundless; we are "chastened of the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world." And, besides, the apostle has declared that it is "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom." "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says the Saviour himself: "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And with respect to the final results of these dispensations,—these "light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"—while our heavenly Father is performing the thing that is appointed for us, we know that "all things work together

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for good to them that love Q-od, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Mar. 21.—*Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.*

Ps. xxv. 4.

By the “way” and “paths of the Lord,” concerning which the Psalmist sought divine instruction and direction, we understand the way in which his people walk in regard to him; and these are called his ways, because he *appoints* them, and because he *enjoins* us to walk in them. Thus the apostle says, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Our walking in them means our obedience to his commands. We read of “walking in the fear of the Lord,” and of “walking in love.” We read also of the “way of truth,” of the “way of holiness,” and of the “way everlasting.” When, therefore, David said, “Teach me thy way, O God; I will walk in thy paths;” “I will meditate on thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways;” “Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end,”—in all these instances he means the way in which we walk with regard to God, when we are yielding obedience to his injunctions. There are persons who speak much of God’s commandments under the Law, who yet despise the chief of them under the gospel. For, as the Apostle John says, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” Now, until this command of God be complied with, it is in vain to urge upon people their obligations to obedience; but when we are in Christ, walking in a state of union and communion with him, by faith receiving succours from him as our Head of influence, as well as supplies from him as our Head of government, then, with regard to walking in the way of his statutes generally, we are furnished with inclination as well as with ability; and then, when the Saviour says, “Deny thyself; take up thy cross and follow me;” when we are commanded to “pray without ceasing;” when he says, “Repair to my house; come to my table; walk so as to please me, and abound therein more and more;” when any Of these injunctions thus come from him, oh, then it is pleasing

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to walk in his ways, and the Christian can say, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

"Make me to walk in thy commands;
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
Offend against my God."

Mar. 22.—*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Ps. xxxii. 1.

WHEN David looked around to find a truly happy man, he does not say, blessed is he whose grounds bring forth plentifully; blessed is the man who governs the nations with a nod; blessed is the man who achieves victory after victory; blessed is the man who is admired for genius and science. To many of these distinctions he himself was no stranger. He was a musician, a poet, a hero, and a king; but these distinctions were not sufficient to give him happiness; and therefore he prayed, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." For "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." And here he exclaims, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." The Psalmist here intimates that the enjoyment of forgiveness of sins is a present blessing; not that a man shall be blessed at some future time, but he says, "Blessed *is* the man whose transgression *is* forgiven," &c. The man who realizes by faith that his transgressions are forgiven has the true notion of blessedness, and the reality. Happiness, present, future, and eternal, is hereby insured to him, and in the enjoyment of this distinguished privilege he has everlasting blessedness begun. They are indeed truly blessed to whom this blessing is assured; for, while our safety depends upon our state, our consolation principally depends upon our knowledge. How many of the Lord's family, for want of this "full assurance of hope," go mourning all their days! Those who are favoured to "know the joyful sound" are blessed in their duties, blessed in their comforts, blessed in their trials. To them affliction has no curse, death has no sting, eternity has no terrors.

Mar. 23.—*Who hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* 2 Tim. i. 10.

“CONJECTURE and opinion,” says Paley, “are not knowledge; and in religion nothing more is known than is proved.” Thus, while the heathen philosophers had these surmisings concerning a future state, and brought forward some strong probabilities in its favour, and some fine and worthy sentiments escaped them, they neither understood nor taught “life and immortality” as a doctrine; they never employed it as a principle and motive. But had not life and immortality been a matter known to and believed in by the Jews? We unhesitatingly reply in the affirmative. Jacob, when dying, said, “I have waited for thy salvation.” David says, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” “Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” How explicit was Job’s profession!—“I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” How, then, it may be asked, could life and immortality be brought to light through the gospel? We answer, the gospel may be taken generally for divine revelation at large. It was thus Paul used the word. “The gospel,” he says, “was preached to the Jews, but the word preached did not profit them.” The word gospel may also signify the evangelical dispensation, including the personal ministry of our Lord and the inspired communications of the apostles. In the former sense, to the Jews, life and immortality was brought to light *really*; in the latter sense, we understand that the gospel brought life and immortality to light *pre-eminently*; and in this sense it is required to be taken in this place. The dawn was visible before; now the day appeared. To the Jews the Sun of righteousness was below the horizon; on us he has risen with healing under his wings. Hence our Saviour said to his disciples, “Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.” Therefore, while it is to the Scriptures only we repair for a know-

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ledge of life and immortality, we must look peculiarly and principally to the New Testament for clearer decisions and fuller representations concerning it, where we are furnished with illustrations and pledges thereof in a risen and glorified Saviour? How transcendently glorious, with what unrivalled excellence, does Christianity appear, compared with ancient and modern heathenism! How unsatisfying, how cold, how mean, how gross, how absurd, how disgusting, are the intimations of Deism, the Elysian fields of Pagan poetry, the rewards of Hindooism, the paradise of Mohammedanism, when placed by the side of the "life and immortality brought to light through the gospel"!

Mar. 24.—*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*
1 John iii. 2.

ALTHOUGH we read, in one place, that "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel," yet we read in another place of the "glory that *shall* be revealed in us." Of the saint's future state of blessedness, we have been supplied with sublime and glorious intimations; for "God hath revealed unto us the things which he hath prepared for them that love him by his Spirit;" so that, while we know something of the heavenly state, much, very much, remains hidden. As yet we are able only to survey its dawns: for the full disclosures of its blessedness and glory we are not yet prepared. There is a natural and a moral prevention. It would not be proper, if it were possible; and it would not be possible, if it were proper. As the only-wise God has attempered our senses to our present condition, the knowledge we possess of the heavenly world is adjusted in conformity to the claims of our present sphere of action and happiness. Some duties, if they do not entirely result from our ignorance, are enforced by it. Hence our Lord said unto his disciples, "Watch, for you know not the day or the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." We are to "walk by faith, and not by sight;" and are to *honour God by obeying and trusting, him*. Fuller developments of the glory that shall be revealed would *derange the present order of things*. The revelation would be so engrossing and overwhelming as to render our present engagements insignificant and uninteresting, and so loosen and detach us from the necessary and every-day duties of life that we should be both indisposed and unable to

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abide with God in our calling. Our station would become deserted, and other agents would be required to carry on these concerns. The full knowledge of the future blessedness of the righteous would also be *dangerous* and *destructive*. Our physical powers are very limited, and we are unable to bear very powerful excitement. The Queen of Sheba fainted at seeing the glory of Solomon. When the angel approached Daniel, there was no strength in him; and though John had reclined on the Saviour's bosom, yet when he appeared to him at Patmos he fell at his feet as dead. No; we are now unable to bear up under that exceeding weight of glory which shall be revealed in us. *Nor is the full knowledge more practical than it is expedient*. We have no adequate medium of receiving the communication. Our modes of apprehending and feeling are not refined and exalted enough to take hold of objects so peculiar and spiritual. Even our thoughts, that seem to "leave dull mortality behind," here labour and strive in vain. The sublimest genius, aided by inspiration, could only say, "Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" Yet, with all our deficiencies, we are not ignorant of the reality of this glory, nor are left without such a knowledge concerning it as our duty and welfare allow and require; for though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Mar. 25.—*According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.* 1 Tim. i. 11.

THE glory of the gospel is derived from its Author. It is the "testimony of Christ," as it is called, "that has digged down the altars;" it is this which has rescued the captives; it is this which has destroyed the works of the devil; it is this which draws all to the side of Christ. What wonder that the angels, who are "proverbial for knowledge, yet make this the theme for study! They pass by the sun, and moon, and stars, to drop round the cross. They are nowhere represented as being philosophers or astronomers, but they are Christian students; they "desire to look into these things,"—"the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Oh! the gospel dignifies every place it enters. Capernaum was a poor despicable fishing-town; but

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Christ preached in it, and hence he speaks of it as being “exalted to heaven.” When the gospel enters a country, it is said, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Wherefore was this earth formed? and why is it perpetuated? Was it only to be a promenade for Satan, a laboratory for the chemist, a counting-house for the merchant, a field of battle and slaughter for the hero, a cabinet for the intrigues of princes, an observatory for the star-gazers? Was it for this that Christ rejoiced in its habitable parts? No; but because the knowledge of him was to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; because the mountains were to bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness; because he should come down as rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth; because he should live, and to him should be given of the gold of Sheba; because his name should endure forever,—his name should be continued as long as the sun; men should be blessed in him, and all nations should call him blessed. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.

Mar. 26.—*Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.*
Isa. xxvii. 7, 8.

THE afflictions of the Lord’s people are never unalloyed. However severe the trial or painful the affliction, there are many alleviations. Let us take our condition, however trying, and we shall see whether there is nothing in the time, the place, the manner, or the nature of the affliction that is not calculated to alleviate the suffering, or lessen its pressure. Let candour, let gratitude, let truth, examine into the circumstances of the case, and we shall discover that it might have been much worse, much more painful, and more difficult to bear. If we take our case and lay it by the side of our desert, what should we have suffered had he “dealt with us after our sins, or rewarded us according to our iniquities”? And, if we place our trouble by the side of the condition of others, we shall find that, though we may have lost much of our substance, they have nothing left. Some may have buried

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one of their children, but the grave has written others childless in the earth. Some walk upon crutches, but others are bed-ridden. Some have months of vanity, but others have wearisome nights, and the multitude of their bones is filled with strong pain. But, oh, let us think of the sufferings of Jesus,—think of his dignity, of his pre-existent state, of his innocency. We suffer *justly*, for we suffer the due reward of our deeds; but he did no evil. He could say to his most inveterate foes, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Yet see him. We suffer *partially*, but he suffered in *every part* that was capable of pain. We suffer *occasionally*, and for hours and days of pain we have weeks and months of ease and pleasure. His sufferings *extended from the manger to the cross*. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Our sufferings are *unforeseen by us*; his were *known from the beginning*, and he bore them in prospect before he endured them in reality; and what tongue can express—whose imagination can conceive—what he endured when “he began to be sore amazed, and very heavy”? when his “soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death”? when “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground”? when he exclaimed, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“Now let our pains be all forgot,
Our hearts no more repine;
Our sufferings are not worth a thought
When, Lord, compared with thine.”

Mar. 27.—*I will be with him in trouble*. Ps. xci. 15.

MANY are the afflictions of the righteous, but they have not to bear their trials, endure affliction, or to tread the path of tribulation, alone. Knowing the anxieties and fears of his people, the Lord has graciously assured to them the comfort and help of his presence in every time of trouble. “When thou passest through the waters,” he says, “I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.” He is a Friend that more than realizes the expectations of his people. “Confidence in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble,” says the Wise Man, “is like a broken tooth and a foot out of joint.” These are worse than useless, for not only do they

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fail us but cause us much pain. Job found it so; and so did Paul, when he said, "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me." But the Lord had not forsaken him; for he adds, "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." Yes, whoever fails or forsakes us, "he abideth faithful." Jacob found him so in Bethel. Driven from home, and travelling through a desert land, in a forlorn and solitary condition, and full of anxious forebodings, he "lights on a certain place and tarries there all night, because the sun was set:"—the darkness was his curtain, the ground his bed, and a stone his pillow. There he falls asleep. There God assured him that he would be with him in all places, and would not leave him until he had done all he promised him. Thus his people now find him to be better than their fears, and surpassing in loving-kindness their highest hopes. He is with his people really, efficiently, and peculiarly, in the day of trouble. If, therefore, we "faint in the day of adversity," it is by losing sight of Him whose grace is always sufficient for us, whose strength is made perfect in our weakness. In all times of trouble, therefore, let us make the language of Doddridge our own:—

"If thou, my Jesus, still be nigh,
Cheerful I live, and joyful die;
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in thee."

Mar. 28.—*That he might present it to himself.* Eph. v. 27.

IN the Scriptures we find a threefold presentation of believers spoken of. The first of these presentations is what we call *personal*, and this is made by themselves. Of this the apostle speaks when he admonishes the Romans, saying, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." In the experience of every believer there is a solemn sense in which he has acknowledged God's claims: he has asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and has said, with resolution and zeal, "Lord, I am thine; save me." "Other Lords besides thee have had dominion over me, but henceforth by thee only will I make mention of thy name." To thee I dedicate myself. My understanding is thine

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to know thee; my will to choose thee; my heart to love thee; my conscience to fear thee; my memory to retain thee. Thine are mine eyes to behold thy glory; mine ears to hear thy voice; my tongue to show forth thy praise; and my feet to walk in thy ways. Thine is my time, and my substance, and my influence; and if I had the innocence of Adam in Paradise, the meekness of Moses, the faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the fervour of Paul, the perfection of angels, they should be equally, they should be more, thine, than these poor imperfect offerings which I now present. I have only two mites to cast into the treasury,—a body and a soul: my all is too small, and my best is too bad, for thine acceptance; but, Lord, “receive me graciously and love me freely.” Can we say, in the words of Dr. Doddridge, which, says Montgomery, seem to be almost inspired,—

“Oh, happy day, that fix’d my choice
 On thee, my Saviour and my God!
 “Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
 And tell its raptures all abroad.
 “’Tis done; the great transaction’s done:
 I am the Lord’s, and he is mine;
 He drew me, and I follow’d on,
 Charm’d to confess the voice divine.”

The second of these presentations is *official*; and these are made by ministers. This is what the apostle means when he says, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Ministers have a charge. It is to endeavour to bring souls to Christ. And when they have executed their commission they return to Him who employed them; and how painful is their case if then they can only present him with their complaints, and say, “Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” “I have besought them in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to thee; but they have loved idols, and after them they will go.” But oh, it is their joy and crown of rejoicing when they can prevail on sinners to hearken, and they can present them as converts, and at his table, saying, “Lord, here is another who has forsaken the foolish and now desires to walk in the ways of understanding. Lord, here is another who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Lord, here is another weary of the world, and seeking to know,

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and love, and serve, and enjoy thee forever." The third *is divine*. And this is here intended; and the presentation here unquestionably regards a future day,—that day for which all other days were made, and which is more than once so emphatically called "the day of Christ." The presentation is a very peculiar one, for you see it is *by* and *to* the very same Being:—"that he might present it to himself." It is by him he presents it, and it is to him. How is this? By him, for he shall present them. They are presented by him now in the capacity of Mediator, having received them as so many scholars to educate, so many sheep to feed, so many patients to heal, so many captives to ransom; and, having finished the work that was given him to do, he comes and presents them all, not one failing. But then it is also to him, "that he may present it to himself." "They are presented to him, as he is God over all, blessed forever," to whom they originally belonged, and to whom they are now restored as to their Lord to serve and their portion to enjoy.

Mar. 29.—That he might present it to himself *a glorious church*. Eph. v. 27.

SUCH is the final aim of the Saviour in giving himself a ransom for us,—an aim worthy of himself, worthy of his character, of his wisdom, and of his love. It is infinitely honourable to himself, and will draw forth the everlasting admiration and adoration of the heavenly world. And how delightful is it to his people now, while in the contemplation of the all-important scheme their minds are borne along from view to view, from wonder to wonder, from blessing to blessing, from glory to glory, till that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part is done away! How shall *we* be presented? Shall we be presented with the sheep on the right hand, or with the goats on the left? What a question is here! For there will be a presentation of the wicked, as well as of the righteous. They will be presented to Satan,—the god and the prince of this world, whose subjects they are, and as his children,—for the devil was their father, and his lusts they would do; they will hear the sentence,—"Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, shall we then be presented with the sheep or with the goats? How can we ascertain this? Why,

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thus:—Which of these do we now resemble? Which of these do we now choose? Who are now our loved companions? For at death every man will go to his own company, God sanctifies always before he glorifies: what he completes in heaven he always begins on earth. We must be “children” before we are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Before we possess heaven we must be “wrought,” as the apostle says, “for the selfsame thing,” and have “the earnest of the Spirit.” The presentation of believers by the Saviour to himself should animate and comfort all his followers. Christians do not feel so much under their abasements and sufferings as they do under their remaining moral and spiritual infirmities. No; this it is which makes them groan. “When I would do good, evil is present with me,” and “oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” The work of grace begun in them will not be left unfinished. Each believer can say, “Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever; forsake not the work of thine own hands.” Oh, what a blessed change is here! What a change of state! What a change of experience! To feel no more danger from spiritual enemies! to feel no more barrenness of consolation, or lightness in duty, or wandering of thought, or coldness of affection! to wake up and find no darkness of understanding, no rebellion in our wills, no earthly-mindedness in our affections; but all peace, all purity, all assurance, forever! It also should soothe us under the removal of those who sleep in Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples, who were sorrowing, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I.” He said to the daughters of Jerusalem, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” So our dying connections in reality say, “Weep not for us, but for yourselves.” “You are in the conflict; our warfare is accomplished. You are out at sea amid the winds and the waves; we have entered the desired haven.” We miss them by the way; we miss their friendship, their prayers, their counsels, and their admonitions; but, since it is their gain, we will not indulge in selfish grief; and while we mourn we will not “sorrow,—sorrow as those who have no hope; we will remember that we have not long to mourn, that the separation is not perpetual, and that a time of reunion is approaching, when

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we shall rejoin those who are gone before us, and who are waiting to receive us into everlasting habitations." Lastly, How are we bound to the Saviour, who has destined such glory for us and is now preparing us for it! We, who are undeserving the least of all his mercies, yet he not only spares, but pardons and enriches us, and will glorify us forever with himself. Oh, where but in the gospel could we ever read of such gracious dealings as these? Oh, who could have procured such blessings for us but the Lord of life and glory? Who would have undertaken the work in the view of such sufferings, but one

"Whose heart is made of tenderness,
Whose bowels melt with love?"

Let us be daily giving ourselves to Him who gave himself for us, and glorify him on earth who is now advancing our glory in heaven. Let us take our station at the foot of his cross, and there thus judge:—"That if One died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."

Mar. 30.—Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen. Jude i. 24, 25.

WE here see with what this presentation will be accompanied. He will "present them with exceeding joy." That is, with exceeding joy to *himself*; for he will then "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" and also exceeding joy as to *themselves*; for if now, when they see him not, yet, believing, they are able to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," what will it be when they stand before him,—when they shall "see him as he is"? Why, they will resemble the Queen of Sheba: it was a good report which she heard of Solomon's fame; it lessened her attachment to home, and induced her to take a long and expensive journey. Her own expectation seemed grand before; but when she was presented at the court of the Jewish monarch she "had no more spirit in her," and

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when she came to herself she exclaimed, "The half was not told me." So will the reality exceed all the Christian's previous expectations. This is not the representation of man's excited imagination, but it is the result of divine inspiration; and here is no inconsiderable evidence of the divinity of our Lord and Saviour; for we read expressly that we are "redeemed unto God by his blood," and that, finally, "God will be all, and in all." And this can only be explained by the admission of his own testimony:—"I and my Father are one: he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We see *where* the presentation shall be made:—"before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." This implies some distance or absence at present,—a want of some present recognition and acknowledgment. And so, while they are at "home in the body," they are "absent from the Lord." Indeed, there is now a connection and a communion between them; but the distinction is rather this:—he is now with them, hereafter they will be with him. They are now in a kind of confinement; they are called his "prisoners." He comes to them, and views them through the bars, and smiles and speaks; and sometimes also he comes in and converses freely with them, and leaves many a token of kindness behind, and tells them, moreover, that shortly he will "come and receive them to himself, that where he is they shall be also." And so, by-and-by, his chariot is heard approaching, the doors are opened, the fetters fall off, and he conveys them to his court and his palace above, to be presented there, not for an hour or for a day, but to go no more out,—to "be forever with the Lord." "He, therefore," says David, "shall receive me into glory." He will say himself then, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We see, also, in what *state* they will be presented:—with "exceeding joy," before his presence; he will present them "blameless."

Mar. 31.—*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

Rom. vi. 14.

ONE of the Christian's most inveterate enemies is sin. This is the cause of all his other evils and enemies. Sin is nothing to some, and they are well aware of it. They neither hate nor fear it; they do not oppose the stream, but they are sailing down

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by it, and often singing as they go, though they are moving down to the gulf of perdition. The name of Jesus was imposed upon the Saviour at his birth, because he was to save his people from their sins, and his people consider sin as their chief enemy, and they rejoice in the persuasion that the Saviour gave himself for them, not only "to redeem them from all iniquity, but to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It will be acknowledged that sin, even now, is to be found in a believer. Paul speaks of sin dwelling in him: he says, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man; but I find another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But, *though sin lives in the Christian, the Christian does not live in sin*, and, though sin be not *destroyed* in him, it is *dethroned* in him; it shall no longer reign in his mortal body, that he should fulfil it in the lusts thereof; and he has this assurance given him:—that "sin shall not have dominion over him, for he is not under the law, but under grace." And grace deserves its name: it is able to subdue every other principle; it occupies the place which sin had done before; it "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord;" and though there be sin in the Christian, yet it is resisted, it is abhorred. A Christian is not only restrained from the practice of sin while his inclination attaches him to it, but he has mortified it; he is "dead unto sin but alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." A change took place at the foot of the cross: he saw by faith Him whom he had pierced, and he mourned for it. Hear his language:—

"Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms
From grace's magazine,
And I'll proclaim eternal war
With every darling sin."

How little his fellow-creatures know of him! They that receive not the things of the Spirit of God judge of Christians by themselves, and because they love sin they think the Christian loves it, and, therefore, that he embraces particular doctrines because they favour licentiousness. Why, *he* does not desire a license to sin; why, he is not a swine, and therefore does not deem wallowing in the mire any privilege. He loves purity, and there-

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fore dislikes impurity, and prays that he may be “cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.” There is as much difference between sin found in a Christian and sin found in a natural man, as there is between poison found in a serpent and found in a man. Now, poison is found in a serpent, but it does him no injury. Why? Because it is natural to him; it is part of his system: but poison in a man makes him sick; it is no part of his nature. And so it is with regard to the Christian. Sin in him will always be abhorred, and he cannot be happy until he be entirely delivered from it; he therefore abhors it in his heart and resists it in his life. But he will not be called to resist it always, nor to resist it long. Now “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” Now he rises to a daily conflict, but the conflict will soon be over:—

“Sin, his worst enemy before,
 Shall vex his eyes and ears no more;
 His inward foes shall all be slain,
 Nor Satan break his peace again.”

April 1.—*Wherein ye greatly rejoice.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

THERE are only three things really great in the universe,—God, the soul, and eternity; and, as religion has to do with them all, its dealings have something peculiar and superior to them all. For instance, Bo Christians hate themselves as they are depraved and defiled creatures? This hating is nothing less than loathing and self-abhorrence. Hence it is said, “They shall loathe themselves for all their abominations.” Hence Job says, “Behold, I am vile; wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.” Or do they mourn? They “look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son, and are in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!” Or do they fear? “He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints.” Or do they rejoice? “Wherein they greatly rejoice.” What more expressive of the greatness of this joy can we have than the language of Bavid, when he says, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted “? And in

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his admonition, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Why, it is expressed by the joy of harvest and of victory. "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil I" It is held forth by the joy of marriage. "Behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." And by the mother's joy, "who forgetteth her anguish in the joy that a man is born into the world." So we read in the Scripture that *this joy is everlasting* also; and that it is "strong consolation;" strong enough to invigorate the trembling heart; strong enough to wean the soul from the world; strong enough to bear it up under its losses and distresses; strong enough to enable the believer to say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, the and fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall he no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Yea, and "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

April 2.—*His great love wherewith he loved us.* Eph. ii. 4.

THE Saviour is always alive to the welfare of his people; and hence we here read of the greatness of his love towards them. What is love? Some are so insensible as to be incapable of feeling it, or of comprehending its nature; and for their sakes we say what it is. Love leads us to look out for objects of distress, labours to do them good, and exults when it succeeds. We talk of love: there are tender, very tender, hearts to be found in our world. But you Jonathans and Davids—yes, and you mothers—must all cease comparison here. Here is love beyond compare! Is he abased? "For our sakes he became poor." Does he suffer? He bears our sorrows, and for us he dies. Does he go away? It is expedient for us. Does he appear in heaven? He appears in the presence of God for us. Does he establish the ministry of the gospel? It is for the perfecting of the saints. Are they succoured? "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Are they injured?

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“He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye.” Are they afflicted? “In all their afflictions he is afflicted.” “Why does he express himself pleased with their progress and grieved at their deficiencies? “Can a man be profitable to God?” Can their goodness extend to him? No; but he knows that they only who walk uprightly walk surely; he knows that if they forsake him they despise their own mercies; he knows that they cannot fall without breaking their bones. Why, “he takes pleasure in his people;” he makes all things subservient to their welfare. Other people are the subjects of his providence; but his people are at the end of it. For them his “eyes run to and fro through the earth.” In all their perplexities, distresses, and losses, in all their trying circumstances, in all that is painful and grievous to them, he has a regard to their salvation. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” but not as the fathers of our flesh: “they chasten us for a few days for their own pleasure, but he for our profit,” &c. His object is the salvation of the soul. He prunes the tree not to injure it, but to make it more fruitful; he lops off the suckers that would steal the sap; he uses the ploughshare that he may break up their hearts; he uses the crucible to clear away the dross, that the pure metal may appear to his glory; he brings them into the wilderness, that he may “speak comfortably to them, and give them vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.”

April 3.—*When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father.* John xiii. 1.

THERE is something peculiar here. He knew the time of his departure, and had his eye upon it, and regulated his measures by it, from the beginning; but we know not the day of our death. We have our hour of departure appointed us. Infinite wisdom and goodness have placed us here, and we are not to undervalue a state in which, we enjoy so many comforts and are favoured with so many means of grace and blessed and dignified with opportunities of usefulness; but the voice cries, (and we are always to be in a state of readiness to listen to it,) “Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted.” We are not to throw down our implements and run out of the field before the work of the day is done. But what will it then be but a de-

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parture out of this world, this vain world, this vexing world, this defiling, this tempting world,—this world which crucified the Lord of glory,—in which we walk by faith, and in which we so often exclaim, “Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar!” What will it be but a departure out of this world “unto the Father”? For those who are “the sons and daughters of the Lord almighty” are going to their Father too. No disaster shall hinder the Christian from arriving at his Father’s house in peace. And that house is replenished with every attraction which can draw us forward. When the venerable Mede, whose gray hairs were a “crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness,” was asked how he was, resting upon his staff, he cheerfully answered, “Why, going home as fast as I can; as every honest man ought to do when his day’s work is done: and I bless God that I have a home to go to.” What is dying now but the coming of our hour to depart out of this world unto the Father?—

“There is my house and portion fair
My treasure and my heart is there,
 And my abiding home;
For me my elder brethren stay,
And angels beckon me away,
 And Jesus bids me come.”

April 4.—*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

CHRIST is all and in all in the gospel ministry. He is the grand theme. If we turn to the first preachers of the gospel, we shall find each of them saying, with the inspired apostle, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” If they would persuade men by the terrors of the Lord, they were his terrors; if they spake of the wrath of the Almighty, it was the great day of his wrath. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.” Did they speak of the divine perfections? they made them shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. Did they speak of providence? they placed the reins of universal empire in his hand, and made him “Head over all things, to his church which is his body.” Did they speak of heaven? they made it to consist in

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seeing his glory,—in seeing him as he is, and in “being forever with the Lord.” Did they speak of repentance? they never thought of fetching this water out of the millstone of man’s natural heart; they knew that the tear of penitence could only drop from the eye of faith, in sight of the cross; as it is written, “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and they shall be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” If they called upon persons to pray, it was to ask in his name. “Yea,” said they, “whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” The difference between an evangelical and a legal preacher is not that the one enforces holiness and good works, and the other not; but the difference is, the one makes them the source of our salvation, the other as evidences; the one lays them as the foundation, the other employs them only as the superstructure. Both admonish, both exhort, their hearers; but here is the difference:—the one waters his dead plants, the other waters living ones, and they produce “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.”

April 5.—*He is risen.* Matt. xxviii. 7.

HERE is a pact admitted: this is the resurrection of Christ. That he was dead—really dead—is a fact that cannot be questioned. The soldier’s spear pierced his heart, and forthwith flowed thereout blood and water. His body, taken down from the cross, embalmed, and buried by people in his new tomb,—what became of it? “If Christ be not risen, then,” says the apostle, “is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Ye are yet in your sins, and then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” But if he is risen, then the reproach of the cross is rolled away; then his divine mission is clearly evinced, and he is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead; then is established the perfection of his sufferings; then he hath accomplished salvation for all who believe; then there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; then death hath ceased to be the king of terrors, and the grave has become the avenue to life and immortality. “Remember,”

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therefore, says the Apostle Paul to Timothy, (as if this was the chief thing,) "remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel." Ecclesiastical history tells us that it was customary for the first Christians, when they met on a Lord's-day morning, to exclaim, "*He is risen!*" By the overruling providence of God, many circumstances transpired to render the resurrection of Christ most obvious and undeniable. "They rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre." They sealed the tomb. They appointed a Roman watch. But on the morning of the third day, as it was dawning, behold, there was a great earthquake, for "the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said to the woman, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him, as I have told you."

April 6.—*If ye then he risen with Christ.* Col. iii. 1.

HERE is a privilege supposed. It is that of a believer being risen with Christ. This is to be understood four ways. Observe, First, Christians are risen with Christ *professedly*. By joining his church and coming to the table of the Lord, they "show forth the Lord's death until he come." Secondly, *Representatively*. There is a union subsisting between Christ and his people which is both vital and federal,—a union which no distance of time can affect, and which no power can alter. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" So, then, when he died they died, when he arose they arose also. He both died and rose as the Head and Representative of all his people. Hence the apostle speaks of them as being "quicken together with Christ," and "raised up together with Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thirdly, *Spiritually*. This regards the soul only, and is accomplished by divine agency. As says the apostle, "You hath he

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quicken, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Every resurrection necessarily supposes a previous death. The widow who had been living in pleasure the apostle declared to be dead while she lived; that is, morally and spiritually dead. This is the condition of all men before conversion. They are dead; they have no spiritual life; they perform no spiritual actions. But some are delivered from this state. "Likewise," saith the apostle, "reckon ye also yourselves to be alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Through his raising them from the death of sin, they live a life of righteousness, a holy, a divine life, a life of faith, a life of dedication to his service and to his glory. Fourthly, Believers are risen with Christ by *anticipation*. Though the souls of departed saints are living in a separate state, that state is not final nor perfect; only one part of the Christian is living, and therefore a separate state cannot but be an imperfect one. The body is an essential part of human nature, and was purchased by the Saviour as well as the soul. Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of the Christian in complete and perfect blessedness, they pass on at once to the resurrection. "I will raise him up," says our Lord, four times in one chapter,— "I will raise him up at the last day." Now, our Saviour's body is the model of our resurrection-body, and he is able and engaged to conform us to it; therefore "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, by the working where-with he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." This state of glorification with Christ is not only assured to the Christian, but is even at present commenced; they have pledges of it, and earnestings of it, and the first-fruits of it; they have fore-tastes of the glory which shall be fully and completely revealed in them hereafter.

"The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below;
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground
 From faith and hope may grow.
 The hill of Zion yields
 A thousand sacred sweets
 Before we reach the heavenly field
 Or walk the golden streets."

April 7.—*Seek those things which are above.* Col. iii. 1.

HERE is a duty enjoined. The things themselves which are to engage the Christian's attention are not described by their nature, but by their residence; but the one involves the other. Their residence shows their excellency, for unless they were excellent they would not be admitted there, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." There is no night, no pain, no sin, there; every thing is pure and attractive. "There is a peace which passeth all understanding, a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory." Here we "see through a glass darkly, but then face to face;" but "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." There are our beloved connections, with whom we "took sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company." There are the spirits of the just made perfect; there are patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. There is the innumerable company of angels; there He is who is fairer than the children of men:—

"Nor earth, nor sky, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears;
His beauties we can never trace
Till we behold him face to face."

"In his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is therefore easy to see why we should "seek those things which are above," because they are *necessary*. While many things are desirable, and some things are important, one thing is *absolutely needful*. As Dr. Watts sings,—

"Without his graces and his self
I were a wretch undone."

Whatever earthly possessions we might be able to command, they could never afford satisfaction. Earthly things can never fill the void in the immensity of a man's expectations and desires, but God can fill the soul with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We should seek the things above, because they are *attainable*. We are not sure of success in our pursuits after earthly good; but here grace insures success, and if, like Mary, we have chosen the good part, it shall not be taken from us. Observe the *manner*

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in which the things above are to be sought:—*diligently*; the “sluggard desireth and hath not, because his hands refuse to labour.” *Consistently*; “Balaam said, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,” regardless of any concern to live the righteous man’s life. Pilate asked, What is truth? but waited not for a reply. With *earnestness*; “Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” This seeking must be *supreme* and *immediate*. Our Lord says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,”—first, in point of importance and precedence. *Intensely*; “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” *Obediently*; It is in a course of well-doing. *Perseveringly*; We are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, until we obtain eternal life.

April 8.—*We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* Rom. v. 11.

WHATEVER the people of the world may imagine, religion is the highest wisdom: “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” and “wisdom is justified of all her children.” The service religion demands is founded upon principles that will bear the strictest investigation. It is a reasonable service, and hence it is enjoined on all Christians to be “always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear.” And the Christian’s joy proceeds from knowledge; and therefore David says, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” There is no joy—not even the joy of hope—apart from the gospel. Now, when a man is convinced that he is a sinner, and condemned by the righteous law of God, which says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them,” it is impossible for him to rejoice, even in hope, till he can see God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; nor can he be happy until he knows that he is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Oh, what a burden is laid upon the conscience when we are thus awakened!—a burden too heavy for us to bear. What a burden had poor Christian, as he travelled on from day

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to day, till he came within sight of the cross,—when he saw this his burden was loosed from off his shoulders and rolled into the sepulchre! To dismiss allegory, the Christian is thus “justified by faith, and has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yea, “he rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.” Thus, as Cowper says,—

“To see the law by Christ fulfill’d,
And hear his pardoning voice,
Changes the slave into a child,
And duty into choice.”

Though our safety does not depend, yet our comfort does, upon clear and full views of the gospel, of our acceptance with God, of the manner of our justification, of our safety, and of the certainty of our perseverance even to the end, and of our becoming more than conquerors “through him who hath loved us.” Therefore we joy in God in proportion as we are receiving this knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ. Therefore it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,—that is, the doctrine of grace: and thus may we go on our way rejoicing.

April 9.—*This do in remembrance of me.* Luke xxii. 19.

How many persons who would be considered Christians live in the neglect of this command! Sometimes this neglect may be greatly influenced by superstition; it may arise from the disproportionate share of solemnity and danger they attach to the same in distinction from all other religious ordinances and exercises. They read that “he who eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body;” and they do not remember that he who sings, and that he who reads, and he who hears, and he who worships, and that he who attends any other religious ordinance or exercise, unworthily, also increases his sin and condemnation. And if these persons were to act consistently they would turn their backs upon them all. We read in the Gospel of Matthew, “When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him

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into outer darkness.” This they read; but why do not they read what the king did to those who did not comply with the invitation? What did he do with these? “He sent forth his armies and destroyed them.” Therefore neglect is as critical and dangerous, yea, it is more so than improper attendance. Is there any thing hard in this command? If we had a dear departed friend who had left us an emblem or memorial of himself, should not we highly prize it? Suppose it to be the picture of that friend, and that it represented him in the act of dying in consequence of his endeavouring to save us from fire or from flood; and suppose he delivered this to us with his own dying hand, saying, “When this you see, remember me,” and we should throw it into the lumber-room, and there leave it, and never wipe off the dust or bring it forth to look upon it and kiss it and weep: what would be thought of our kindness to the memory of that friend? And such a memorial have we in the Lord’s supper. It is the only representative of him he has left in the church. He exhibited it when dying. He delivered it on the same night in which he was betrayed. Jesus then took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat this my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.” Is he not worthy of everlasting remembrance? Is not his death of such importance that it can never be exhibited enough, exposed enough? Have not his people found that walking in this commandment has been profitable and delightful, in reference to which they have said, “I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste”? And when the dear picture has been presented before them, they have been thrilled with holy joy, and have said,—

“Let all our sacred passions move
While we rehearse his deeds.”

April 10.—*When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.*

John xvi. 8.

LET us here notice the Author and medium of this discovery and method. As to the *Author*, we have here our Saviour’s own declaration that it is the Spirit of the blessed God. All that is really good in the souls of the children of men is from

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him. From him comes the first pulse of life, the first breath of life, the first desire after holy things, the first instance of real dedication to God. It is he "that works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Now, as to the *medium*, or the *instruments*, we would observe that these are principally the law and the gospel. The law is one of the principal instruments, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." "Sin is the transgression of the law." "I had not known lust," says the apostle, "unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." "I was alive," said he, "without the law; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died." When he speaks of his being without the law, he does not mean without the law itself, (for he had it,) but without the knowledge of it; and therefore when he saw the spirituality of it,—when he saw that it required a perfection of obedience in its principles, in its extent, and in its duration, and found that it reached to the heart as well as to the life,—that it ranked lust with adultery, and anger and malice with murder,—when he found that "cursed is every one that continueth not-in all things written in the book of the law to do them,"—what was the consequence? Why, says he, "sin revived." It seemed dead before; it now awakened. Sins that he had forgotten before now rushed into his remembrance as if they had been recently committed. Things which once appeared innocent now appeared criminal; things which once seemed to him meritorious, and deserving of reward, now appeared deserving only of condemnation. "Sin revived, and I died" as to all persuasion of my safety for eternity or acceptance with God. Or, as Watts expressed it,—

"My hopes of heaven were firm and bright;
But, when the gospel came
With a convincing power and light,
I found how vile I am."

The law is always to be used so; and for this purpose the gospel teaches us the nature of our disease by showing us the nature of our remedy. It teaches us the desperateness of our disease by the vastness of the remedy that has been employed. Oh, says the awakened and enlightened dinner, what must have been my bondage if such an infinite price was necessary for my redemption! Oh, how deep must my guilt and depravity have been if such a sacrifice was necessary for my pardon and renova-

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tion! And then,—what adds to this,—Oh! what a wretch! that after all I should have neglected, I should have despised, this remedy! Oh, how ungrateful and vile! after all this love to turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven! That I should disregard such a Deliverer, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame! Observe the *mode in which it is accomplished*. This is gradual. The thing does not take place all at once: it is effected by degrees. Usually, indeed, it begins with a charging home of one single sin upon the conscience of the man,—the sin to which he has been peculiarly addicted, and by which his conscience, therefore, is now alarmed. But the thing does not terminate here. From one evil the man is led on to the discovery of another. From the life he is led to the heart; from the stream he is led to the foul fountain. The Christian, therefore, is making progress in this discovery continually. It is increased by the various events and by the various dispensations of Providence. Little do we know of ourselves, indeed, until we are enlightened, until we meet with our own proper trial. We little imagine that there is so much mud in us, until the waves become excited and throw up the mire and dirt. The Christian is often brought to feel wonder as well as distress. Oh, says he, I little imagined that I was so impatient till I was required to wait. I little thought I was so proud till I was called to stoop. But so it is: “behold, I am vile.” The Christian, therefore, often supposes that he is worse, because he is wiser than he was. Because he sees more of his inward corruptions he thinks there are more. “I have heard some people,” says Mr. Newton, “pray that God would show them all the wickedness of their hearts. I have said to myself, It is well that God will not hear their prayer, for if he did it would drive them to madness or despair, unless at the same time they had a proportionate view of the work and the ability and the love of their Lord and Saviour.” No one could bear all the discovery at once; and therefore it is revealed by degrees; therefore he shows us our vileness by little and little as we are able to bear it.

April 11.—*My sin is ever before me*. Ps. li. 3.

SIN was to the Psalmist a more plentiful source of grief than all his suffering from other causes. Not only his great sin in his

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fall, but his daily, hourly failures. "Who," says he, "can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." He does not mean faults secret from others and known to himself; this would be hypocrisy; but faults unknown to himself, which he yet knew were in existence, and with which he wished to become acquainted. Paul was preserved from falling into many vices after his conversion; it is a mercy to be preserved so far; but we find him even then saying, "I find a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." And then he exclaims, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Can a Christian now help seeing his imperfections and his remaining corruptions whenever he compares himself (and he ought to compare himself) with his obligations, or his professions, or his privileges? and can he see these and not be affected by them? He will not, indeed, give up his hope: this has another foundation; he is not required to abandon this: but surely W will give up his pride and his self-righteousness. Surely after such views he will "rejoice only in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Surely, not only the thought of God as a gracious and forgiving but as a holy and pure God will lead him to say, with Job, "Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee? Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And David wept for the sins of others as well as his own. "I beheld the transgressors," says he, "and was grieved." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law." A Christian can never be a stranger to this; he knows that in every sin there is something exceedingly sinful, that it is an "abominable thing, which God hates." He knows that whenever sin is committed there is a soul destroyed, a God dishonoured, a Saviour opposed and set at naught. Can he help feeling? Is he a citizen? He is also a patriot: he will love his country, and therefore he will mourn for the abominations that are done in the midst of the land. Is he a member of a Christian community? he will be "sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of it will be a burden." Has he irreligious relations? he will say, with Esther, "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Has he ungodly children walking the downward road? Like David, he will with a broken heart exclaim, "O Absalom, my son, would to God I

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had died for thee!" and, like Abraham, his prayer will be, "Oh that Ishmael may live before thee!" yes, and, with Paul, their heart's desire and prayer to God for these beloved ones will be "that they may be saved."

April 12.—*After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

WE here find the Saviour in the very mysterious passage of his life which elapsed between his resurrection and his ascension. Where he was during these intervening weeks, and how he was employed, it is impossible for us to conjecture. All that we know is, that he maintained an occasional intercourse with his disciples, "to whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." To one of these interviews we are here led. "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted." Who were these doubters? As all the apostles had seen him before, and as Thomas, most incredulous of them all, expressed himself perfectly satisfied, it could not be any of the eleven. But there were others now present; and this is the season to which the apostle refers when he says, "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once." The case was this. Though he had repeatedly appeared to his apostles separately and collectively, all these appearances were unexpected; whereas this interview was appointed. Jesus ordered his disciples to go away to a particular mountain in Galilee, and promised there to be seen of them. Now, knowing this, and not willing to share their privilege alone, they called upon their neighbours and friends to accompany them on this occasion. This series to account for the largeness of the assembly, and for the hesitation of some who, not so accurately remembering his features, could not instantly identify him, (an instance of the impartiality and fearlessness of the sacred historians in recording all that happened, whether it could be deemed favourable or unfavourable to their cause) And we read that Jesus "came and spake unto them." "Came"? Was he not there with them before? Dr. Campbell therefore renders it, "And Jesus drew

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near"—that is, he approached the eleven in the presence of the five hundred—"and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

April 18.—*Put thou my tears into thy bottle.* Ps. lvi. 8.

SOME have supposed here a reference which I think is not well founded. It is well known that the Romans had little vessels called *lachrymals*, which were filled (as the word signifies) with tears, and commonly buried with the friend whose death drew them forth, as it was supposed it would add to his comfort to know that he was not forgotten or disregarded by those who were left behind him. Some of these are to be seen in the cabinets of the curious now. There are several of them in the British Museum. When the grave of Marcus Tullius Cicero was dug up in the year 1544, there were found in it two glass urns, the larger filled with a kind of earth, and the lesser with a fluid: one was supposed to have contained his ashes, and the other these tokens of friendship. The image, indeed, is a very tender one. See the mother bending over the breathless body of her cherub boy and endeavouring to secure in her little urn the tears which are gushing from her streaming eyes. See the widow weeping by the side of the corpse of the guide of her youth,—her beloved,—leaning on whom she was going out of the wilderness; but now thrown back to walk alone the rest of the way, and endeavouring to secure those precious drops to preserve as a pledge, or rather to inter with the beloved remains. But we do not know that such a custom ever obtained among the Jews, and especially at this very early period; nor is it necessary to have such an allusion. Nature is the best expositor of Scripture. If we could but throw off from us the loads of difficulties which learned men have oppressed it with, and could but bring common sense, and explain it by a reference to our own feelings, it would be more easy to understand it. The thing here is simple enough; the meaning is, Let my sorrows—the very expression of my sorrows—be dear to thee; and, as a precious fluid is valued and preserved, "put thou my tears into thy bottle;" or, by a change of metaphor, says he, "Look upon mine afflictions and my pain, and forgive all my sins;" "remember me with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people," and "say unto my

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soul, I am thy salvation." How soothing and encouraging is the presence and attention of a friend in distress, standing by ready to comfort, ready to wipe off with a soft hand the falling tear. Many have been there; many have said to those around, "Pity me, pity me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." Some are perhaps ready to say, "Well, I have shed tears enough, God knows!" Nay, but he does *not* know it! you have not shed enough, or you would not be shedding them *now*. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;" and not one of those tears shall be shed in vain, and not one of them is forgotten before God.

April 14.—*I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

Ps. cxix. 113.

THOUGH the Jews lived under a dispensation which abounded with carnal ordinances, many of them were very far from being carnal men. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews holds forth some of them as examples for Christian imitation, and commands us "not to be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Now, there are persons who seem to imagine that the religion of the Jews consisted in the paternity of Abraham, the rite of circumcision, numerous sacrifices and ceremonial observances. But it consisted in none of these; it was essentially the same with the Christian. The difference was not in the body, but in the dress; not in the reality, but in the degree:—"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." They worshipped the same God; their theology is our theology; their morality is our morality; and the book of Psalms is a magazine of Christian experience, and especially this psalm. Now, this belongs to what we call experimental religion. Experience means knowledge derived from experiment, in contradistinction to speculation and theory. Much has been said, especially since the days of Bacon, of experimental philosophy; and why may we not say much also of experimental religion? Is not the one as capable of trial and realization as the other? It is pleasing to hear men talk of things through which they have actually and feelingly passed,—the pilgrim of his travels, the soldier of his wars, the patient of his cure; especially if we are

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in the same relation, if we are travellers, if we are soldiers, if we are patients: we are then desirous of hearing something that suits our circumstances, and on which we can rely. "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love." David here speaks of his hatred and of his love. These are two very powerful passions and principles. We are all the subjects of them; and if a man does but know what to do with his hatred and his love—that is, where to place them, and how to exercise them—he may be called a wise man. You remember the language of Solomon:—"A wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart at his left." How is this? Why, physically considered, every man's heart is at his left hand; but Solomon uses the word "heart" metaphorically; he means by it the affections; and when he says, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand," he means that he rightly exercises them, or dexterously; the word dexterous being derived from *dexter*, the Latin word for the right hand. The object of hatred should be always something bad; the object of love should be always something good. And this would be the case in a perfect being. This was the case in man before the fall; but the fall perverted every thing, and, in consequence of it, men have been lovers of evil and haters of good. But the design of the gospel is to rectify all this confusion, and to put things in proper order again. In the Acts, the apostles are spoken of as "men who are come to turn the world upside-down;" and the testimony is very true; not indeed in the sense—the factious, seditious sense—of their accusers, but in their own sense, and with regard to their own aim, which was "to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" and to make men "new creatures;" with whom old things had passed away, and all things had become new. Let us, therefore, endeavour to consider and improve what David says of his aversion:—"I hate vain thoughts;" and what he says of his affection:—"But thy law do I love."

April 15.—*I, even I, am lie that comforteth you.* Isa. li. 12.

How great and worthy of admiration is the condescension of God! The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he dwells verily with men upon the earth. "All nations are before him as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity." "As for man; his days

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are as grass," "his foundation is in the dust;" he is "of yesterday, and knows nothing." But this is not all: we are unworthy as well as mean, and guilty as well as poor; and therefore we may well exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" How astonishing is the manifestation of this! How wonderful the way in which he himself by anticipation has represented in the Scriptures the condescension and tenderness of the divine regards, that he will "put our tears into his bottle," and that he will "write them in his book"! There is only one passage in the Scriptures where his condescension is represented in a still more wonderful way. It is where David says, "Thou shalt comfort him upon the bed of languishing; thou shalt make all his bed in his sickness." There is the Eternal and the Almighty attending upon his sick child; and, as it is in the margin, "He shaketh up the bed," and maketh his bed, so God chooseth to represent himself. Let us, as Young says,—

"Not stop at wonder, but imitate and live."

There is implanted in human nature a principle of emulation, the design of which is to excite us at the view of whatever is noble and excellent; and, as God is the perfection and the source of all excellency, the ultimate design of the principle was unquestionably to excite us to an imitation of himself. But here now is the grand mistake: we wish to imitate God as the greatest of beings; whereas we ought to wish to imitate him as the best of beings. We are disposed readily enough to make him our model in his natural perfections, and would, if we could, know as he knows; we would "thunder with a voice like his;" we would have others under our management, like him. But this imitation of God is the way to sink, not rise; this is the very essence of sin. Thus Adam and Eve fell, who wished to be "as gods, knowing good and evil." This is the way that Lucifer fell. "I will be," said he, "like the Most High." This is the way the devils fell: they abode not in their first estate, but must think of a better, and would not be content with such things as they had, and so in aspiring they were cast down to hell. We are required to make God our model in his moral perfections, to be holy as he is holy, patient as he is patient, to hold fast the profession of our faith because he is faithful that

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hath promised, to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful, to be like the Son of God: he was the "image of the invisible," and when he was upon earth "God was manifest in the flesh." Let us contemplate him and seek to be like him. "Be ye therefore," says the apostle, "followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Let all wanderers and weepers repair here. God is able to comfort us in all our tribulation. If, therefore, we are sufferers in any way, let us beware of worldly dissipation and of infidel reasonings. But let us draw near to the God of all grace and the God of all comfort. If we approach him in the Son of his love, he will receive us graciously and love us freely. Let us say, with David, "All my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." And in a little time we shall enter his presence, and be able to say, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling," and "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," and show forth all his praise.

April 16.—*He is a babe.* Heb. v. 13.

THE apostle does not refer to a babe by nature. This, indeed, is one of the most lovely, attractive, and interesting objects in creation. It seems impossible not to consider his destination and the powers in his nature not yet unfolded; we think of the spirit inspired by the Almighty, which dwells within the beautiful shrine. When we see the bud, we think of the flower; when we see the dawn, we think of the day; when we see a crown, we think of a king. How should we have felt towards a Newton, or towards a Milton, if, dandling them on our knee, we had known at the time all the splendours of fame to which they were born? But who knows what any babe may become, however humble its birth, or however mean his external condition? The princess opened the ark of bulrushes, and the babe wept; and she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrew children;" but that forlorn, friendless babe was to become the son of Pharaoh's daughter, the scourge of Pharaoh, the destruction of Egypt, the deliverer of the Jews, the king in Jeshurun, and the prophet of the Most High. But a babe is

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not to be a babe always: we expect to see him grow; and, indeed, we soon witness the process. It is scarcely possible to look at such a being and not remember the exhortation, "Despise not one of these little ones," or without calling Hannah to mind; and, above all, can we forget Him who "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"? But Paul refers not to a babe natural, but to a babe spiritual; for there is an infancy in the church as well as an infancy in the family,—an infancy morally as well as corporeally; and this religious infancy is two-fold. First, There is a *real and proper religious infancy*. We always look for it at the commencement of the divine life; for Christians are new creatures, and therefore they have a beginning, and the beginning is small. But they grow; they "go from strength to strength;" they "wax stronger and stronger;" they "increase with all the increase of God;" from babes they become young men, and from young men fathers in Christ. Secondly, There is an *improper and a reprovably religious infancy*. It is this the apostle speaks of: for observe his language: he does not say, "You were such as needed milk, and not strong meat;" but "Ye are become such." If we saw a man playing with toys, we should be ready to say, "Why, you are too old and too big for this;" but we should not say this if we saw a child. "When I was a child," says Paul, "I spake as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." And if, after a child is weaned and grown and put to a public school, he should cry after his mother, and by a supposable transformation become a babe, crying for the rattle and the knee, why, we should be shocked and offended. Such a thing is physically impossible, but not morally and religiously so; it is the very thing the apostle has in view: his language, indeed, is metaphorical, but there is truth in it, and let us get towards it. Christians are commanded to advance in religion, and they are expected to grow in grace: but is this always the case? Is it commonly the case? Are there not many instances in which, instead of increase, there is decrease,—instead of going forward, there is going backward? We read of the "first days of Israel;" and does not the Saviour reprove the church of Ephesus, and say, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and do the first works"?

April 17.—*The word of righteousness.* Hebrews v. 13.

LET us consider the character here given of the gospel:—"The word of righteousness." It is called so for two reasons. First, To hold forth the *quality* of it. The word of righteousness, then, is the righteous word,—a common mode of expression in the Scriptures; and it is so. It resembles the Author of it, who is "holy in all his ways and righteous in all his works;" and so we are told that "holy men of God spake as they were, moved by the Holy Ghost." The more the book is examined, the more its contents will be found to be "a doctrine according to godliness." Every word of God is pure; and, while the gospel brings salvation, it "teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Secondly, It reminds us of the *subject* of which it treats; and this is righteousness. "The word of righteousness." What righteousness? The righteousness of God. This is an essential attribute of his nature, and the Bible displays this; the Scriptures are full of instances of the faithfulness and truth of God, in fulfilling his threatenings and his promises, with regard to countries, families, and individuals; and, whatever difficulties may attend some of the divine dispensations, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid: how then shall God judge the world?" "Clouds and darkness are round about him; justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is still moreover the righteousness of God as to the dispensation of his grace in the salvation of men. It is the word of righteousness; that is, it reveals the way in which God makes us righteous, both in state and nature. In answer to the question, "How can man be just with God?" or, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" it may be observed, that he is not "just with God," but he can be made so. He is not clean, but he can be made so. How interesting must such a communication as this be! Now, this "word of righteousness" shows us how it is that God accomplishes this work; how he makes us righteous in state; how he makes us righteous in a way of justification: that it is not by the deeds of the law, for "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified," but by "the hearing of faith." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on

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him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." This is what is called the "righteousness of God;" this is the everlasting righteousness which the Saviour wrought; this is the righteousness without the law, yet testified and witnessed by the law and the prophets, and, above all, by the apostles. The righteousness of Adam in Paradise was only the righteousness of a man; and the righteousness of an angel in heaven is only the righteousness of a creature; it is therefore a finite righteousness: but the Christian's righteousness—the righteousness on which he depends, and which he pleads before God—is a righteousness divine and infinite, and therefore he is said not only in this righteousness to be justified, but in this righteousness to be exalted. And it shows us also how it makes us righteous in disposition, or righteous in a way of sanctification. This is by the grace of the Holy Spirit, that, as we are justified by the blood of Christ, so we are saved "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." God then works in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure;" he produces in us righteous views, principles, feelings, righteous hopes and fears, righteous joys and sorrows. And all this is necessary, not only in a way of evidence, but of qualification. In vain would God pardon our sins unless he subdued them. This work is equally of God with the former, and, through his operation in the first instance, is perfect at once; his operation in the second is gradual:—He has "begun a good work," and he "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Then the one will be as complete as the other; then he will "present his people faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," and there will be nothing but righteousness.

April 18.—*I hate vain thoughts.* Ps. cxix. 113.

VAIN thoughts are foolish thoughts, wandering thoughts, unbelieving thoughts, worldly thoughts, self-righteous thoughts, sinful thoughts. For observe that vain thoughts here do not mean empty ones, but evil ones; as when our Saviour says, "that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." By "idle words" he does not mean merely frivolous, silly, and trifling words, but words of moral blame, and which will serve to condemn us in the last day. By these

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“vain thoughts” David means his own vain thoughts,—not the vain thoughts of others. He could not be conscious of the thoughts of others, but he could know his own. He was forbidden to judge the thoughts of others, but he was bound to examine his own. He was not employed in exploring the vineyards of others while he neglected his own; and it would be much better for us if we lived, morally, more at home, and less abroad with others. It is a fine and striking remark of one whose “private thoughts” have been long before the religious public. “For many years back,” says he, “I have had nothing to do with the faults and failings of others, for I have had too many of my own to engage my time and attention.” Now, with regard to these vain thoughts we are led to notice two things: First, That *he had vain thoughts*: and who has not? There are indeed some persons who have not had a vain thought for many years; but they are to be found in heaven, where we read of “the spirits of just men made perfect,” where that which is perfect is come, and where that which is imperfect is done away. But who upon earth are free from these? who can say, “I have made my heart clean; I am free from sin”? Why, “there is not a just man upon earth that does good, and sinneth not.” Why, “in many things we offend all.” We are to pray for our daily pardon as well as for our daily bread. If we take a Christian,—not a novice, but one who has been for years in the school of experience; hear him: “Oh,” says he, “I have good objects enough to command and engross my attention, especially my God and Saviour, who is all my salvation and all my desire, my glory and my joy; the ‘chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.’

‘Why should I cleave to things below,
And let my God, my Saviour, go?’

I love the Lord’s day, and call ‘the Sabbath a delight, and the holy of the Lord, honourable.’ And I know that I am commanded not to walk in my own ways nor to think my own thoughts. But, alas! how will these intruders invade my golden hours! I enter my closet, and I wish to exclude the world; but, before I can shut to the door, in rushes a rabble along with them and often fills the best part of the room. I love the habitation of God’s house, and repair to the place where his honour dwelleth; but there often I find it to be what he called the temple in the days

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of his flesh,—‘a house of merchandise,’ or ‘a den of thieves.’ I then repaired to his table. If any thing could fix my roving heart, surely it must be my dying God before me, when Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us; and yet even there I cannot wait upon the Lord without distraction; even then I am more concerned with the ‘outward and visible sign’ than with the ‘inward and spiritual grace.’” Secondly, Here is something else: he not only had vain thoughts, but he *hated them*:—“I hate vain thoughts.” This is the difference between the naturally and spiritually minded. Evil thoughts are common to both; but let us mark the distinction. The natural man loves these thoughts; he therefore encourages them: the spiritually-minded man hates them. But how can a man evince that, though he has vain thoughts, he hates them? Why, he will be sure to be humbled before God; and then he will be sure to pray against them; and if these prayers be sincere and importunate, why, then he will strive against them.

April 19.—*Thy law do I love.* Ps. cxix. 113.

LET us consider two things,—the object of the Psalmist’s attachment and the attachment itself. There are some who say they have nothing to do with the law; but let them take heed, or the law will have something to do with them by-and-by. And what do they mean by this antinomian sentiment? What is the law of God, that they thus view freedom from it as a very desirable privilege? Why, according to our Saviour, the law consists entirely in love,—loving God supremely, and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Can we ever be free from obligation to this? Can any man, in a right temper of mind, deem it a privilege to have nothing to do with this? How is it with a real Christian? It is true he is often complaining: but then he complains not of the Master, but of the servant; he complains not of the strictness of the law, but of the baseness of the observance. He does not wish to bring down the perfection of God’s law to his imperfection, but wishes to be raised up, and brought to a state of conformity to its highest excellencies; and he knows he cannot be entirely happy till he is entirely holy, and that he can never be entirely holy till God establishes this blessed law in all the powers of his soul. The word “law” here means the Scriptures, or the

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word of God at large. We cannot but observe, in reading this psalm, how many terms David employs to express it:—his “commands,” “precepts,” “statutes,” “judgments,” “testimonies,” “law.” And the word “law” is not unusually employed in other places. Isaiah says, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;” where, we see, the law of God clearly means his word, and his “word” is used as explanatory of it. So in the nineteenth psalm:—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” It is not the moral law which converts, but it is the gospel which converts. Paul speaks of “the spirit of life, which makes us free from the law of sin and death;” and James calls it “the perfect law of liberty.” The difference between the law and the gospel does not consist in this:—that the one commands and the other does not; but in the difference of the things commanded. The language of the one is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” the language of the other is, “Do this and live.” And therefore the Apostle John says, “This is his commandment,”—his grand, peculiar commandment:—“That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” Now, we shall do well to take this view of this precept. It will afford us encouragement and relieve us from distress. We may question our right to a promise, but we cannot question our right to obey a divine command. We never ask, May we love one another? We know that he has commanded it. Why then do we ask, “May I trust in Christ? may I believe in him?” when in the very same passage, in the very same words, it is equally commanded? Now, as to his attachment to this law, we see the Psalmist here makes profession of it unto God himself, and makes God the witness of it. He could say, in sincerity and truth, “I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.”

April 20.—*Behold, I am vile.* Job xl. 4.

LET us with regard to this self-accusation observe three things. In the first place, the *quality acknowledged*,—“vileness.” “Behold, I am vile.” “Vile,” says Johnson in his dictionary, is “base, mean, worthless, despicable, impure.” There is nothing in the world to which this will apply so much as to sin, and

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to sin Job referred when he said, "Behold, I am vile." He does not call himself vile because he was a man reduced, poor, and needy: no man of sense ever would do so. Character intrinsically does not depend upon adventitious circumstances. As Young says,—

"Pigmies are pigmies still, though perch'd on Alps,
And pyramids are pyramids in vales."

If property were vileness, as by their discourse some people seem to think, how vile must the apostles have been who said, "Even to this very hour we hunger and thirst, are naked, are destitute, and have no certain dwelling-place"! And how vile must have been the Lord of all, who said, "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head"! Neither did Job call himself vile because he was now despised, and full of sores and boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. Why, he was never dearer to God than when he was among the ashes scraping himself with the potsherd. Paul calls our present body "this vile body." "Who shall change this vile body?" says he: it is in the margin, "this body of our humiliation." And, indeed, it is humble enough! How low are some of its appetites, how mortifying some of its infirmities, how trying some of its diseases,—requiring all the force of friendship to induce us to discharge towards a fellow-creature the duties of humanity! But no wounds, or bruises, or putrefying sores, are to be compared to sin; nothing is so vile in the universe as this. How Vile must that be which leads a God of love to threaten to punish with everlasting destruction from his presence and his power, and which would not allow of his pardoning without the sacrifice of his own Son! Secondly, *Who made this confession?* Surely it was some very gross transgressor, or some newly-awakened penitent. No; it was Job, a saint of no ordinary magnitude. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job." God himself, the Judge of all, mentions him along with righteous Noah and Daniel. He himself tells us that he was a perfect man,—one that feared God and eschewed evil; that there was none like him in the earth. What then do we learn from hence, but that the most eminent saints are the most remote from vain thoughts of themselves? We know that the nearer a man approaches to perfection in any thing, the more sensible he becomes of his remaining defi-

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ciencies, and the more hungry and thirsty he is for improvement. It is Job who cries, "Behold, I am vile." Not that there is no difference between a saint and a sinner. Job does not mean to intimate that he loved sin, or that he lived in it. His friends accused him of this, which he denied, saying, in his address to God, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked;" "behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." But he knew that sin, though it did not reign in him, yet lived in him, yet opposed him, yet vexed him, yet defiled him, so that he could not do the thing that he would; and, if he was preserved from gross evils, he felt within him an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, and knew by his own experience that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Thirdly, *When* was the acknowledgment uttered,—“Behold, I am vile”? It was immediately after God’s interview with him; after God’s thus addressing him:—“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee; and answer thou me.” It was after God had further displayed himself in the perfection of several of his works,—it was then that Job answered and said, “Behold, I am vile;” and what does this teach us but that the more we have to do with God the more we shall feel and see our unworthiness? Yes; if any thing can make us feel our littleness, it must be a view of Jehovah’s wisdom; if any thing can make us sensible of our weakness, it must be the view of his Almighty Sovereignty; if any thing can make us feel our depravity, it must be the view of his spotless purity,—the infinite purity of Him “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean.” How was it with Isaiah? Had it not the same issue with him? “Woe is me,” said he; “for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” So Peter, upon the display of his power and goodness in the miraculous draught of fishes, exclaimed, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” This arose not from aversion to his presence, for he trusted his happiness in him; but from a sense of his unworthiness contrasted with the exhibition of his glory. So says the sweet singer in our British Israel:—

“The more thy glory strikes mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie;
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high.”

April 21.—*Behold, I am vile.* Job xl. 4.

LET us observe the effects of this conviction. They are various. One of these effects is evermore *wonderment*. Nothing is more wonderful to the man than what he now sees of himself. That he should have acted in such an ungrateful, such a foolish, such a base manner as he has been doing! That he should have been so deluded as to suppose he was safe, and in a state of acceptance with God, when he was in the very jaws of destruction. That he did not see his danger and his depravity sooner. And then, again, he wonders that he sees it now, when he looks around him and sees so many who know nothing of it; who know not the gospel and the way of life, and “have no fear of God before their eyes.” *Humiliation* will be another result of this discovery. Ignorance is a pedestal upon which pride always stands: down with the pedestal, and the idol must fall to the ground. Tes, self-abasement will always follow this self-acquaintance. Self-complacency then will be at an end, and the man will condemn himself, and say, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” Self-dependence will now be at an end, and he will own that without the Saviour he can do nothing. Thus the day of conviction is always the day of self-abasement, in which the proud and lofty looks are brought low, and the Lord alone is exalted. The *endearment of the Saviour* is another result of this discovery. Why is it that there are so many to whom he has no form, nor comeliness, nor any beauty, that they should desire him? that they can hear of him, that they can read of him, that they can talk of him, without feeling any attachment to him? “Why is it, but that, to change the image, as Solomon says, “The full soul loatheth the honey-comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet”? Or, to use our Lord’s own expression, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” These set a high value upon the Saviour, the Physician of souls;

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he is now the person to whom the awakened and humbled sinner repairs, throws himself at his dear feet, and cries, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Therefore, says the apostle, "To them that believe he is precious." *Submission under afflictive dispensations* is another effect of this discovery. When a sense of sin lies heavy upon the soul, the sense of trouble will be light. Such a man as this will say, "Why should a living man complain,—a man for the punishment of his sins?" "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." He no longer thinks that God deals hardly with him, but exclaims, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed!" He will not wonder that his trials are so many, but that they are really so few; not that they are so heavy, but that they are so light. *Gratitude* will be another result of this discovery of our vileness. The proud are never grateful. Do what you will, heap whatever favours you may upon them, what reward have you? what thanks have you? They only think you are doing your duty; they think they are deserving of all this. But, when a man feels that he is unworthy of the least of all his mercies, how will he feel with regard to the greatest of them? What will his feeling be when he says, with Paul, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," or with Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him"? *Charity and tenderness towards the faults of others* will be a result from this conviction. The man who at the foot of the cross has been brought to say, "Behold, I am vile," will not look for perfection in others, because he is conscious he is destitute of it himself. He will not have time for pulling motes from other people's eyes, because he will have so much to do in removing beams from his own. Or, if he calls for reproof, he will fall in with the injunction of the apostle:—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

April 22.—*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.* Col. iii. 1.

As if the apostle should say, You will, by seeking those things which are above, evince that you are risen with Christ. And if

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you are Christians indeed, you will act becoming your condition and rank. Surely it is very desirable to be fully assured that we are thus risen with Christ. While many are seeking those things which are earthly, and which perish with their using, let us be concerned to say, "Show me a token for good." "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." There are many who are building their hopes on a sandy foundation, trusting to partial reformatations. Alas! how possible it is to be near the kingdom of God, and not in it! There is no evidence of our being raised to this spiritual condition which can be depended upon separate from heavenly-mindedness, or from setting our affections on things above. For as we have borne the "image of the earthly," we must also "bear the image of the heavenly," or we cannot with safety indulge in a "hope of the glory of God." Then, if we are seeking "those things which are above," our practice must accord with our professions. Hence there are such frequent exhortations in the Scriptures to "walk worthy of God, who has called us unto his kingdom and glory." "Walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith ye are called." Walking, here, is not meritorious, but implies suitableness and correspondence. Alexander, the conqueror of the world, said to a soldier who bore his name, "Either drop my name, or act becoming it." So says the Apostle Paul:—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." How many are there who entirely disregard the things which are above! They are like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright; or, like the Gadarenes, rather than lose their swine, would expel Christ from their coasts. Like Reuben and Gad, they are satisfied with their portion this side Jordan. But what a portion will it prove eventually! for "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" But, blessed be God, there some who have weighed both worlds, and who prefer the "things above" to the things on the earth; who are able to say,—

"Farewell, world; thy gold is dross:
Now I see the bloody cross;
Jesus died to set me free
From the law, and sin, and thee."

Such declare plainly that they "seek a better country," and show

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that "truly their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

April 23.—*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
Matt. xxviii. 18.

WITH regard to the Saviour's prerogative as here asserted by himself, there are three things to be observed. First, Its *nature*:—"power." The question is, whether this power here means authority or ability, or both. Assuredly, both. These are not always co-equal. A man's ability may surpass his authority, and his authority may surpass his ability; but in our risen Redeemer they are equally combined, and his ability and authority are boundless; for observe, Secondly, Its *extent*. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Much has been said of universal monarchy. We read of four monarchies to which this proud attribute has been attached,—the Assyrian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman. But it is only by a stretch of language that either of them could be called universal, as to right, or as to fact; whereas Jesus is entitled to universal subjection, so that all creatures who do not obey him will be considered and treated as rebels and traitors. His empire, therefore, comprehends all the immensity of space:—"He does according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth;" there is no being in church or state, in heaven or earth, free from his control. Even wicked men and devils are under his control:—"He is King of kings and Lord of lords;" "He is Lord of all;" and he has a name given to him above "every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Thirdly, Its *acquisition*. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This, therefore, is not spoken of his essential dominion which he possesses as a Divine Person, "whose goings were of old, from everlasting," and of whom John says, "In the beginning he was with God, and he was God." This is not spoken, we say, of that dominion which he possessed as the Creator, but that which he obtained as Mediator, and which is always in the Scriptures spoken of as conferred, or given. Now, how was it given? Was it given in a way of merit, or in a way of bounty, or in a way of grace? The saints' exaltation is given them in a way of grace; the exaltation of angels is given them in a

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way of bounty; but the exaltation of our Redeemer is given him in a way of merit,—pure, absolute merit. If there could be such a thing as merit, God would be sure to reward it, for it would only indicate an act of righteousness; but no creature can merit any thing, because, by the very law of his nature, all his powers and resources are due to God; and he is to employ them for his glory, whose he is and whom he is bound to serve; but “worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” He deserves, he perfectly deserves, his exaltation and praise. He earned them meritoriously by the services he performed and the sufferings he endured. It is therefore said, that because he was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” “therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” This was “the joy that was set before him,” as the apostle says, “for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame;” and, having executed the tremendous condition on which it was suspended, he would meritoriously claim it. Yes, it was infinitely, in consequence of this, his due, and insured by covenant-engagement. For if “his soul was made an offering for sin,” he was to “see his seed,” and to “prolong his days,” and “the pleasure of the Lord” was to “prosper in his hands.”

April 24.—*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.* Acts v. 31.

LET us view the Saviour’s exaltation in reference to his PERSONAL CHARACTER. When an individual obtains elevation, we are all ready and anxious to know something of his qualities, not merely from curiosity, but on account of the influence he may thereby possess over others. There are four classes of men whom we should not wish to possess much power, for we are persuaded they would either misuse or abuse it. We should not wish an *ignorant* man to possess power: he would, for want of wisdom and knowledge, err in a thousand things. But in him who has “all this power” are “hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” He sees the end from the beginning. He sees actions in their very causes. He can distinguish between appearances and realities. He derives no information from either “events or reports.” He “needs not that any should testify of man, for he

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knows what is in man," and therefore is not deceived, and never feels any perplexity in his government with regard to any of his measures or his means. While other rulers are often at their wits' end, and are compelled to call in counsellors to advise with them, "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and, while he does all things, he does "all things well." Nor should we like an *unfaithful* man to have power. He too would misuse or abuse it. We have instances enough of this. When God confers power he always commits a trust. In all the endowments he bestows, he looks beyond the receiver. The receiver is not to become a proprietor, but a steward; a receiver not for himself only, but for others. We may exemplify this with regard to property. He gives a man wealth, for what purpose? To be useful, to do good, to communicate. But he improperly hoards it, or improperly expends it; and so the goodness of the Benefactor is counteracted by the villainy of the trustee. But with regard to this Saviour-Prince, he will fulfil every responsibility; he is true to all his trusts; he is faithful to all that is deposited in his hands. The apostle tells us that "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" for the use of his church, and he will be faithful to the consignment of it. We are told that "he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them;" and he will apply them accordingly; and he is delighted in the distribution of these benefits. We should not wish an *impatient* man to have power. We know that he would ruin a thousand good plans and interests by his impetuosity, his passion, his haste. For as Solomon wisely remarks, "He that is hasty in spirit exalteth folly." Now, with regard to our Saviour, he does not display slackness, as some people imagine, but he is "long suffering to usward." He exercises patience; he is slow to anger; and therefore it is we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not. Let us view him where Paul has placed him. Paul tells us that he is at the "right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He is in a state of expectancy, and he is waiting for something there. He knows that he must reign "from the river even to the ends of the earth;" but he sees not at present all things put under him. He looks down and sees much of his own empire at present overrun with ignorance, and error, and idolatry, and superstition, and the works of the devil; but he

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knows that he shall realize it all by-and-by, and “in patience, he possesses his soul.” We make haste; we are eager in many cases; we are ready to complain, and even murmur, if our prayers are not immediately answered. Why, many of the prayers which he offered in the days of his flesh are not answered to this very hour; but they all will be answered—every one of them—in due time and manner; and he knows this, and reposes in the determination of infinite wisdom, “whose thoughts are not our thoughts, and whose ways are not our ways.” Lastly, We do not wish an *unmerciful*, an *unkind* man to have power. Solomon tells us that “as a roaring lion and ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.” What does he know of their miseries? He never tasted their bitter bread. What cares he for any of their sufferings, provided he can roll in luxury, splendour, and ease? How often will he draw them from their peaceful homes, and expose them to hardships,—yea, sometimes lead thousands of them to the slaughter,—to gratify his ambition! But there is “another King, one Jesus.” This Prince does not sacrifice his subjects, but he sacrificed himself for their sakes; for precious is their death in his sight. “My flesh,” says he, “I give for the life of the world.” Ah, we here find that power, absolute power, is placed just where it should be placed. We find infinite power lodged in the bosom of infinite benevolence. And we may easily forecast results; for him “shall the wilderness and the solitary place be made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” “Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.”

April 25.—*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*
Matt. xxviii. 18.

LET us view this prerogative of the Saviour, with regard to his friends; and there are two things it demands of us. The first is, that we *should rejoice in it on his behalf*. Love always exults in the prosperity of its object. The mother is never weary in hearing of the praises of her child; the father, in reading the gazette, fastens his eye upon the part which extols the bravery of his son and recommends him to promotion. If we had a dear connection raised from deep distress to high preferment in the state, why, we should be likely to hail him, and to feel, as it were, his success as our own. But there is no love like that which a

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redeemed sinner bears to his Redeemer; and there ought to be none like it: for who has done what he has done, or suffered for us what he has suffered, or bestowed on us what he has bestowed, or promised what he has promised? Nothing, therefore, belonging to him, can be indifferent to us; concerning whom we cannot help exclaiming,—

“Let him be crown’d with majesty
Who bow’d his head to death;
And be his honours sounded loud
By all things that have breath.”

And we may rejoice in the thought, that, as we have sympathized with him in the garden, we shall exult with him now he is upon the throne; that he who once had not a place where to lay his head is now in the possession of all things; that he whose face was marred more than any man’s now shines like the sun in his brightness; that those dear hands, that were once nailed to the cross, now wield the sceptre of universal empire; and that he, our dear Saviour, who once on earth was despised and rejected of men, now in heaven attracts every eye, fills every heart, employs every tongue, both of saints and angels. If when his praises are told forth we could hold our peace, the very stones would cry out. Secondly, We should be comforted by it on *our own behalf*. What may not Christians expect from the state and station, the resources and the power, of one to whom they are so dear, that he calls them his brethren, his sisters, and his mother? Surely, as he is possessed of unsearchable riches, he will never suifer them to want; surely, “because he lives they shall live also.” After suffering and dying for us, it is impossible for us to question his love; and therefore if we perish now it will not be because he is unwilling to save us, but because he is unable; for we may be sure that he will save us if he can. And can this be doubtful? Can it? Where is he now? What is he now? What has he now? All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Oh, let Christians say, in consequence of this, In what state will not this comfort me? In what danger will not this defend me? What want is there but he can supply? What corruption but he can subdue? I am not staggered now at my being called to fight with “principalities and powers.” “In all these things I shall be more than conqueror, through him that hath loved me.” I am not terrified by mortality: he has the keys of

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hell and of death. I am not staggered at the thought that after my death “worms shall destroy this body; I know that in my flesh I shall see God.” And I am looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven, “who shall change my vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

April 26.—*He shall reign forever and ever.* Rev. xi. 15.

THE exaltation of the Saviour is a matter of joy and triumph to all his friends. Their wishes extend beyond themselves. All Christians “look not on their own things only, but also on the things of others,” and especially the “things of Jesus Christ.” They are, therefore, “sorrowful for the solemn assembly,” and the reproach of it is their burden. On the other hand, they rejoice when they see that his word has free course and is glorified; when many are added to his church of such as shall be saved. Their prayer is, that his kingdom may come, that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, that his cause may spread universally. For this they pray, and they have prayed for it ever since they have prayed in reality at all. And they add their exertions to their prayers. For this they employ their talents; for this they employ their resources; for this they endeavour to prevail on others to become workers together in this blessed cause along with them. And what are they doing? Are they building castles in the air? Are they “labouring in the fire, and wearying themselves for very vanity”? They are labouring at a perfect certainty, and they are the only agents in our world who are so. Statesmen, warriors, merchants, all these may become ashamed of their hope; but as to the work in which Christians are engaged, this will succeed, for this “King must reign and prosper.” There are three cases in which the Saviour’s administration justifies, and therefore should excite and increase, our zeal. The first is in cases of *opposition*, and opposition we may always reckon upon if we are engaged in the work of the Lord. But we should never be discouraged by it. It is very unbecoming in Christians ever to “tremble for the ark of God:” and yet how often is this the case! There are some now aghast at the prevalence of Popery, and some too who expect crosses to be erected at the roadside, and that the Smithfield fires are to

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be revived. Why, it is doomed; and, if the Scriptures had not foretold this, we might fully expect it from the operation of various agencies now in action. Then we hear people frequently exclaim, "The church is in danger." What church? There is one church that is not in danger,—that church of which the Redeemer says, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Suppose a number of persons leagued together to pull down the sun: what should we think of it? Should we be afraid of the plot? Should we fear on behalf of the sun? The sun would rise and laugh at their puny efforts, and go on in the greatness of his strength. Dioclesian erected a pillar, on which he inscribed,—“In (such a year) the Christian heresy was extirpated.” Was it? Julian the Apostate struck a medal, on one side of which he inscribed, “The Christians flee before the Romans;” and on the other side, “Julian, the destroyer of the Christian name.” This he did only a few months before, on his Persian expedition, he bit the dust, and exclaimed, “Thou hast conquered me, O Galilean!” “So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; while they that love thee, let them be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”

The second is, *when we want instruments*. And instruments we always shall want, because he does not choose to work without them,—that is, immediately. He gives the increase; he works all in all; but Paul must plant and Apollos must water. Well, whatever instruments his cause demands, he can either find them or furnish them. The last is, *when the means seem inadequate to the end*. And this indeed will always be the case with the instruments employed; they are all verily inadequate to the end. The most eminent minister or missionary upon earth is ready to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” and we answer, No one alone; but any one is if he hears the sound of his Master’s footsteps behind him, and is accompanied by Him who has “all power in heaven and in earth.” Hence the admonition and charge to his disciples: “All power,” says he, “is given unto me: go ye therefore.” “Go ye;” who? Ye few fishermen, without power to compel, or riches to bribe, or learning to perplex, or eloquence to persuade. “Go ye therefore;” and what to do? “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

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commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Preach doctrines incredible to reason, and they shall be believed; enforce duties subversive of every evil passion, and they shall be obeyed; mention motives which require certainty to feel them, and they shall be felt. Go on with this, in spite of the edicts of emperors, and the persecution of magistrates, and the subtlety of philosophers, and the covetousness and craftiness of priests, and the profligacies of the common people; "and, lo, I am with you alway" for this purpose, "even unto the end of the world." And was he not with them? Did they not succeed? Is he not the same yesterday, to-day, and forever? Is not the residue of the Spirit with him?

April 27.—*Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24.

THIS acknowledgment, and this solicitude, is expressed by the Lord's people now; and there is abundant consolation for such. And we may mention four things to incite and animate them. First, they should remember *that the complaint is not peculiar to them*; they sometimes feel that no one ever sighed or groaned like them, or was condemned like them. But they are forgetting the lessons of Scripture. They do not remember that the Jews in their passage, when they crossed the Red Sea, came to Marah, where the waters were bitter, as well as Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and threescore and ten palm-trees. Or that in the immortal Pilgrim's Progress there were in the way of "the shining light" the Valley of Humiliation and the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as well as the Delectable Mountains. They forget that a very eminent servant of God has said, from his own experience, that "the way to heaven was heaven and hell by turns." They forget that the emblem of the church is a bush burning with fire and not consumed; and that the motto of the church is, "Without are fightings, and within are fears." They forget that in reading the Scriptures they have found one saying, "I am cast out of his sight," and another, "I am cut off from before his eyes," and another, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing," and another, "On my eyelids is the shadow of death." Secondly, We should remember *that this experience is a mercy, and a great*

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mercy; that it is essential to all real religion; that it is previous to all true consolation; that it is a proof of the divine agency. "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." That it is a pledge of the divine favour; that God says, "To that man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." That the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise. "Is Ephraim," says he, "my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for, since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." Thirdly, we should remember that *all in us is not evil* now. We are liable sometimes to mistake in this matter. When we read the writings of Luther and the earlier reformers, we sometimes are rather surprised that they say so much against what they call good works. But we should remember that the good works they thus spoke against were the good works of Popery,—works uncommanded of God:—"Touch not, taste not, handle not, which things have a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility." These they absolutely condemn, but not what we mean by good works, which proceed from a principle of divine grace, and are devoted to the glory of God: they never speak against these. When they were taken out of their places,—when they were placed in the room of Christ,—then indeed they spoke against them, but never otherwise; never as things by which divine grace is endeared, by which we glorify God and serve men, by which we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Let us beware, therefore, that we never depreciate not only what God has done for us, neither what he has done in us. The work of the Holy Spirit is called a "good work in you;" and it is a good work. "I will put my Spirit in him," says God; and his Spirit is good. "The water that I shall give him," says the Saviour, "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Christian, with all his complaints, has something in him more valuable than gold, and which God himself delights in; something which partakes of his image as well as of his own operations. Lastly, as all is not evil in the believer now, *so nothing will be evil in him long*. No: "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand," and our warfare will soon be accomplished.

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“What though our inward lusts rebel?
 ’Tis but a struggling gasp for life.
 The weapons of victorious grace
 Shall slay our sins, and end the strife.”

April 28.—*Unskilful in the word.* Heb. v. 13.

SOME persons are so ignorant and so unfamiliar with the sacred writings as not even to know what is the language of Scripture and what is not, when they hear it. Some are unskilful in *finding* it. How they fumble for parts of the Old Testament in the New, and for parts of the New in the Old! Some are unskilful in *quoting* it. Sometimes they misquote the meaning, frequently the words. Now, the meaning is unquestionably the main thing; but we love the very words, when they are the words the Holy G-host uses. Unskilful in *defending* it. A weak argument, instead of strengthening a good cause, always weakens it. It is like supporting a roof by a rotten pillar. How many doctrines are there which have been proved—that is, attempted to be proved—by passages of Scripture which have no relation to the subject! Persons have frequently endeavoured to prove the divinity of Christ by his miracles. He is divine, and we have proofs enough of it in his blessed book; but his miracles are proofs of his mission, not of his dignity. Moses performed miracles, but Moses was not divine; Paul performed miracles, but Paul was not divine. Unskilful in *applying* it. “Who would give strong meat instead of milk to a babe?” says the apostle. “Who, instead of milk,” says Mr. Newton, “would give to a babe the bones of controversy, either to pick or to bite?” There are things in the Scripture “hard to be understood:” who would lead beginners to these? “Who,” as an old writer says, “would lead sinners to the university of predestination, before they have entered the grammar-school of repentance?” There are passages which regard the distressed and desponding; we should search after these, and ply them with such language as this:—“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;” “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” It requires, as Isaiah says, “the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season.” But there are some who are unwise in applying it to themselves as well as to others. “There is no driving the dog out of the house,” says a quaint author, “without

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making the children cry;" but some do not want to drive him out, and therefore they endeavour to soothe him, and say, "I am not angry with you." So it is here: when hypocrites are unmasked, and when heartless professors of religion are denounced, how often are the humble and sincere ready to seize all this, apply it to themselves, and conclude that they have no part or lot in the matter, and that their heart is not right in the sight of God! The apostle, therefore, after having uttered some very faithful things against backsliders in this epistle, by a fine turn immediately says, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak." There are some who are exceedingly fond of applying things to others which are suited peculiarly to themselves. A good woman said to her minister one Monday, "Oh, sir, you gave it finely to Mrs. such-a-one yesterday." He only wanted to say, but could not, "Dear madam, that was designed for yourself." And then, lastly, how unskilful are many in *perusing* the Scriptures! They are babes, and we do not expect skilfulness from babes. Excellency in every department is commonly the effect of much application and toil, and is to be looked for in those who have their senses exercised and their faculties employed.

April 29.—*Unskilful in the word.* Heb. v. 13.

LET us more particularly consider cases in which persons are very unskilful in using the word of righteousness. There are some things in the Scriptures which may appear to be contradictory to us as long as we remain in this weak state; and when this is the case, it is better for us to leave them than to destroy the plain, obvious meaning of others. We can see harmony between things which appear very contradictory to our little children; but they will see the harmony by-and-by. We can see the opposite ends of a chain thrown across a river, but we cannot see the connection in the middle; this is under water: if the water were lowered, or the chain raised, we should see the middle,—the connection,—as well as the two ends. Yet this reasoning may be pushed too far. The apparent opposition of many passages of Scripture arises entirely from inattention and ignorance in the reader: a little distinction would serve to harmonize. Thus, it is possible and easy to reconcile such language as this:—"Answer

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a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit;" "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments;" "He that believeth maketh not haste." "God repented that he made man;" "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent." "No man is tempted of God;" "God did tempt Abraham." In the same way, people have supposed that Paul and James are opposite to each other as to justification; whereas the one refers to God and the other to man; the one to justification as a reality, and this is by faith, the other as to its evidence and fruits, and this is by works. Now, we find the Scriptures in the hands of some people nothing but confusion: we can never get two ideas or notions to lie straight in their brains. "If," say they, "God works in us to will and to do, why should we work out our own salvation? If it be a duty, how can it be a privilege? If it be a promise, how can it be a command?" Now, these things may be easily harmonized, and will be by those who are "skilful in the word of righteousness." Then they use the word of righteousness unskilfully who do not use *it impartially*. All religious parties have their separate portions and passages of Scripture, while there are others of which they are more or less heedless. They do not, indeed, like to own this; but the thing is undeniable. It is a surprising thing to what a contracted part of the sacred writings the attention of some is confined; and, could they have their way, they would not suffer their preachers to move an inch from it. But we are to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, "and go through the length and breadth of the land of revelation." Why? "All Scripture was given by inspiration of God." "Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope." Why did God give the whole of the Bible, if it were needless? Why, in all the Epistles, after the doctrines are laid down, are personal and relative duties so enforced? "Oh," we have heard some say, "you need not preach upon these; the grace of God will teach people to do these." Why did not the apostles know this, and save themselves all the trouble of specification and enforcement? But the statement is not true: the grace of God is to *enable*, not to *teach*. The Scriptures teach; the Bible contains all the information the

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church will ever possess in this world. The Spirit brings no new information to the mind, but he *leads* us into all truth. A man, therefore, in his proper state of mind, will not confine his attention to parts of the word of righteousness; he will not search it to find comfort only, but profit too; he will look not only after privileges, but duty; he will regard not only the promises, but also the commands; and will be able to say,—

“Make me to walk in thy commands;
’Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
Offend against my God.”

April 30.—*Are they not in thy book?* Ps. lvi. 8.

THAT is, are not my sorrows written and recorded there? What book? The book of his *providence*. Yes, they are all there; their quality is there, their degree is there; their duration is there, and all their sad memorial is there. The book of his *remembrance*, of which we have an account in the prophecy of Malachi:—“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.” We may herein see that the filial fear of God, which they cherished in themselves, was recorded; their words were recorded; yea, their very thoughts were recorded. But in these words of the Psalmist we have something more; here we find it extended to their tears: these also are in his book. But is it so? “Are they not in thy book?” “I know they are!” This is his meaning; the question is not a question of uncertainty, but of affirmation. The conclusion is drawn from three things: First, From *relationship*. Is he not our Father, our Husband, our Friend? And when he takes upon himself these relations towards us, does he not exemplify them,—and not only perfectly, but even divinely too? Secondly, The conclusion is to be drawn from his *promises*. He cannot deny himself; he is a God of truth: “heaven and earth may pass away, but my word shall not pass away.” And what does this word contain? Why, this:—“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; I will be with thee in trouble. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the

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rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee:”—I will be with thee, to sustain thee, to deliver thee, to succour thee. “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” The conclusion is to be drawn, Thirdly, From *his conduct*. “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God.” Christians have seen it with regard to others, in their history and their experience; and have we not seen it in our own? What has he not done for us? Has he not given us his own Son, and thereby an assurance that he will also give us all things? Has he not loved us with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness drawn us to his throne, to his cross, to his house, to his table, to his service? Have we ever sought him and been disappointed? Have we ever, trusted in him and been confounded? Are we not ready to raise a fresh Ebenezer, and say, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped me!”—yea, more; to look back upon the many we have already reared, and say,—

“His love in times past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink j
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.”

Thus we may, therefore, with David, be assured that all our sorrows are “recorded in his book.”

May 1.—*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*
John xiii. 17.

WE ought to be thankful that we have the word of righteousness; that we are not left, as to the most important of all concerns, to the darkness of nature or reason, but that we have the word of God in our own tongue and in our own hands, and that we are not only allowed, but commanded, to “search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life.” The Scriptures are not given for mere speculation or to gratify curiosity, but to lead our feet in the path of peace. Would not a Jew have used unskillfully the pillar of cloud in the wilderness, if he had observed it only as a naturalist or a philosopher?—if he had said, from time to time, I wonder how it is caused; I wonder what its qualities

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are: whether it is at all palpable, or what would be the ingredients if it could be analyzed? and so on. What was to be the design of that pillar? It was to be their conductor to lead them by the right way to a city of habitation; and then it was only well used when they obeyed its movements. So it is here: the gospel is in the nature of a remedy, and it is to be used and applied. It shows a refuge, that we may run into it and be safe. It shows me a Saviour, that I may give up my poor lost soul into his hands, and say, "Lord, save, or I perish;" "God be merciful to me, a sinner." What is the reason men, especially of talent and science, so err with respect to this volume? Why, they never go to it for the purpose of being made wise to salvation, (they do not feel their need of salvation,) but for some other purpose. If they went to it having in view the end God had in giving it,—if they went to it with the question, "What must I do to be saved?"—would the apostles and prophets keep them in a state of uncertainty for one moment? Would not all unite to exclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"? Oh, when we go to it with such an aim, (and we go to it with no purpose worth regarding, unless we go to it with this aim,) then it becomes plain enough; not only the scholar, but the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. "These things," says our Saviour, "are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." And he came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it, more abundantly. No wonder, therefore, that Solomon should say, speaking of this blessed book, "Bind it continually upon thine heart, and tie it about thy neck; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." No wonder that Paul should say, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let your love to the Scriptures increase; but let it increase "in all knowledge and judgment," as the apostle says. Let us therefore seek after a growing acquaintance with it, and use for this purpose all the means in our power, (and we have many.) Above all, let us pray that our footsteps may be ordered by God's word.

May 2.—*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* Matt. vi. 33.

RELIGION should be our *supreme* concern. A man who feels the infinite importance attached to the soul and eternity will be praying to the Lord, "Give me a token for good;" "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation;" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people;" "Oh, visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and glory with thine inheritance." And religion should be our *immediate* concern. Our eternal happiness depends upon our relation to it and our interest in it. This life is our only opportunity to attain it, and this season is not only short, but uncertain. With some, while they have hesitated and lingered, the opportunity has been irrecoverably lost; therefore we are urged to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near." And for our encouragement, the Scriptures have assured us that we shall not, cannot, seek in vain. All things are now ready. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The things which we so earnestly seek after, concerning which we may think how happy we should feel if we could make them our own, are perishing in their using; they afford no satisfaction in the enjoyment. These things cannot profit us in the day of wrath, nor deliver us from death; and yet these are the things for which we are in danger of envying the men of the world, who have their portion in this life. Is it not time for us to grow wiser, and to regulate our desires and pursuits by the judgment of God, which is always according to truth? If we search the Scriptures we shall find that they, and they alone, are wise, safe, and happy, who, while many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" can say, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;" who, while they are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, find that these things also are added thereunto.

May 3.—*Ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.* 1 Thess. i. 7.

WE have seen the people of God as receivers, as followers; we have now to view them as ensamples. It is very observable in nature that things in succession are alternately cause and effect, effect and cause. Thus, parents produce children, and children produce, in time, children; thus, those now obey who, by-and-by, command; thus, learners now become teachers, and those who were followers become leaders themselves. This was the case here; from following the apostles and the Lord Jesus, they “became ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia.” Indeed, what individual is there who is not more or less an ensample to some? Who is there that is entirely isolated? Who is not seen and heard of some? Who is not followed by some? All have some influence, though we are not, perhaps, sufficiently aware of our responsibility, or the use of it. Some speak carelessly before children and servants and neighbours, while the things they say at random may make impressions upon them that may never wear away. Alas! some word, some action, some gesture, some look of ours, years ago, may have given rise to some mistake which is now widely leading some of our fellow-creatures astray. Oh! if we must be commentators, let us see that we are correct; let us see that we are not blotting; let us take especial care that we do nothing to induce people to err or sin. But how honourable was it for these Thessalonians! They were ensamples: to whom? “To them that believe.” Oh, it is easy to be ensamples to some! It is easy to have goodness enough to censure and condemn the grossly wicked; it is easy to have goodness enough to be considered righteous when compared with drunkards, and swearers, and thieves, and robbers; but these Thessalonians were ensamples to the good, to the godly, “to them that believed,”—yea, what is more, to all them that believed in Macedonia and Achaia; though it is very probable that many of these had been in the Lord before them, and had believed before them. There are many cases in which “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.” There are those who set off in a religious course before others, and yet have been surpassed by those who followed after them; for alas! they relaxed in their vigilance or their zeal; they looked back instead of “forgetting the things

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which were behind;" they considered the work in them as already done, instead of praying, with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me;" or they were high-minded, instead of walking humbly with God,—and so God was provoked to leave them in a measure, and so they lost their unction and their vigour which once distinguished them, and suffered those who set off long after to pass them upon the road. For these others were more humble, more watchful, more diligent, more affected with a sense of the goodness of God towards them, more sensible that they had never done enough for him, and therefore they, after being "followers," became "ensamples" to others, and "to all that believed." But how is this with us? The apostle reproaches the Hebrews, and says that for the time they ought to be teachers instead of learners; they had need that one should teach them what be the principles of the gospel of God; and, instead of being able to feed on strong meat, they were to be fed only with milk. Is not this the case with too many? Many are willing to take the lead in other things,—quite willing enough. Yes, to take the lead in cleverness of conversation, in knowledge, in wealth, in power, in authority,—here they have no objection to be leaders: but there is something better than all these, in which we should be concerned to take the lead. Oh that all were covetous!—that is, covetous of the unsearchable riches of Christ! Oh that all were ambitious!—that is, ambitious to obtain the honour that cometh from God only; ambitious not only to have the root of the matter, but for it to nourish; and that we might "abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and the praise of God"! It is in such things as these that we should not wait, but take the lead, and induce others to follow us.

May 4.—*Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.* Ps. cxix. 97.

DAVID, as we have already observed, here means by the "law" the Scriptures, or the word of God at large, including much less than we mean now by the word of God. He had only the five books of Moses, a few narratives, and a few of the prophets; but in addition to these we have all the prophets, we have the four evangelists, we have the Acts of the Apostles, we have the Epis-

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ties, and we have the Revelation of St. John. How, therefore, is our coast enlarged! and if David could say, "I have rejoiced at thy word as one that findeth great spoil," what may we say? If he said, "I have taken thy testimonies as my heritage forever," narrow and bounded as it was, what may we say of our heritage, expanded as it is?

"'Tis a brood land of wealth unknown,
Where springs of life arise;
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
And hidden treasure lies."

Observe, also, that there is enough to excite and justify the believer's greatest attachment to the Scriptures, because of the *grand object and aim of the whole*, from the beginning to the end. And what is this but to testify of the Saviour? It is this which makes the Christian so prize the book. He says,—

"There my Redeemer's face I see,
And read his name who died for me."

There we can contemplate him in his person, relations, character, offices, influences, blessedness. "Search the Scriptures," therefore, says the Saviour; "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." And then, how dear also, how delightful, are the *histories* of this book! and "whatsoever things" of this kind "were written aforetime are written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." How delightful are the *doctrines* of this book!—the doctrine of God's everlasting and unchangeable love, of "redemption by the blood of Christ," of justification by faith, of regeneration, not by baptism, but by the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," of "acceptance in the beloved," of the saints' final perseverance, of the resurrection, and of eternal life. Then, how much there is to draw forth and justify our attachment to the *promises* of Scripture! "These are exceedingly great and precious." They are made to suit all our circumstances and exigencies; and then they are "all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us." So that when the Christian looks within him, and looks into the book, he finds something provided for all his evils, and for the removal of them. And if he looks forward and "knows not what a day may bring forth," then he looks into the book and finds that "all the ways of the

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Lord are mercy and truth to them that fear him;" and that "all things work together for good to them that love him;" and that he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." There is another thing which exceedingly attaches Christians to their Bibles; and that is, *experience*. In how many and in what various ways does this endear it to them! "Oh!" says the Christian, "how often have I quenched my thirst in a warm day, and in this weary land, at this spring of living waters! I have had many benumbings; but 'thy word hath quickened me.' I have been exposed to many imminent perils; but 'by the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.' Many a trial I have had personally and relatively, and often the greater part of my heart's bitterness has been known only to myself; but, 'unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.'"

May 5.—*This is love:—that we walk after his commandments.*
2 John 6.

HERE love is set forth as the principle of obedience. Obedience may arise from various motives:—from fear, from hope, reputation, recompense. But here we have Christian obedience, and this also we see proceeds from the principle of love. Let us consider the excellency of this principle. First, Love, as the principle of obedience, *renders it divinely acceptable*. "My son," says God, "give me thine heart." The Lord looketh at the heart, and where that is towards him he will pardon a thousand mistakes and infirmities, and say, "It was well that it was in thine heart." "Where there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Christ said of Mary, "She hath done what she could." Secondly, Love, as the principle of obedience, *renders it delightful to ourselves*. "What are the most pleasing actions you ever performed?" was a question once addressed to a man; who answered, "The services I have performed for my friends." Jacob served for a wife: for a wife he kept sheep; for seven years he served, during which he had to endure the heat of the day and the cold of the night, and to bear all the casual losses of the flock and of the herd; and yet these seven years seemed to him only as so many days, for the love he bore to Rachel. It is

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this principle which reconciles the mother, and more than reconciles her, to numberless and nameless privations, attention, and self-denial, in rearing her infant charge. "Love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it." Religion made Paul a sufferer, but it did not deprive him of pleasure, because he was actuated by love to Him whom he served, and therefore, says he, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." And when Peter and John had been stripped and scourged ignominiously in the council, they withdrew, rejoicing "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Christians are men wondered at; and perhaps nothing excites more surprise in the minds of the poor blinded people of the world, who have their portion in this life and think of nothing else, than to see their zeal and their ardour in a cause that confers on them no secular advantages. The fact is, they know the motion, but they are perfectly unacquainted with the mainspring that produces it. The love of Christ constraineth them to live, not unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again. Once more, love, as the principle of obedience, *renders it impartial*. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments." Nothing but love will ever produce this. Other considerations may induce persons to avoid some sins, especially those to which they have little constitutional tendency,—those to which they are but little tempted by any thing in their station or calling. But what is to make a man crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts? What is to enable a man to pluck out a right eye or cut off a right hand? "What is to induce him to say, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Other things may induce a man to regard some duties, and especially those which are agreeable and easy,—those which will bring peace or profit; but it is love only that will throw down the will at the feet of Jesus, that will lead us to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

May 6.—*He is altogether lovely*. Sol. Song, v. 16.

THERE is only one Being in the universe to whom, for one moment, these words will apply. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." "He

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came to his own, but his own received him not;" and he is still "despised and rejected of men." But this is not universally the case; there are some blessed exceptions; there are some who know his name and put their trust in him, to whom he is fairer than the children of men, yea, "he is altogether lovely." Peter says, "To them that believe he is precious." With regard to these admirers we have two remarks to make. First, We hope *their number is increasing*. We hope, by means of the instruction given to the rising generation, numbers of children will be heard in the temple, crying, "Hosanna! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" We hope, by the endeavours made, that the poor will have "the gospel preached to them." We hope, by the efforts put forth to translate the Scriptures and to send forth missionaries, that he will soon have "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;" that "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain;" "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Secondly, *Their attachment to him is well founded*. The world, indeed, knoweth him not; they consider their religion as enthusiasm: but it is a "reasonable service;" they can give a reason of the hope that is in them; they know whom they have believed, and he is every way worthy of their blessing and praise. He is every thing with them, because he is every thing to them. He is their Rock and their Refuge, their sun and their shield, their righteousness and their strength, their only and all-sufficient resource in every time of need! And this is their testimony:—"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

May 7.—*He that is spiritual*. 1 Cor. ii. 15.

THE spiritual man is opposed to the natural man. A natural man means a man in his unregenerate state, under the power and influence of those principles and affections which are natural; a spiritual man is one who is renewed by the Spirit of God, the Author and Source of all real goodness and holiness. Hence we read of being "born of the Spirit," of "living in the Spirit," of "walking in the Spirit," of "being led by the Spirit," of

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“praying in the Spirit,” of being “filled with the Spirit,” of being “strengthened by the Spirit,” and “bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit.” No wonder, therefore, they are called spiritual. From the Spirit of God they derive a character, and become themselves what they naturally were not. They have spiritual *appetites*; they “hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Hence they hope and fear and mourn and rejoice accordingly. They have spiritual *senses*, as the apostle says, which are “exercised to discern good and evil.” They have spiritual *eyes*; they can see the Saviour-King on his throne, and the land that is very far off: they have spiritual *ears*; they know his voice: they have spiritual *lips*; they show forth his praise: they have spiritual *taste*; and therefore they can savour the things which be of God. But let us more particularly examine ourselves by the tests which are laid down in the Scriptures whereby we may ascertain whether we are of the number of “the spiritual.” We may judge of our character by our *thoughts*. The thoughts are the first-born of the mind, and always resemble it: a spiritual man’s thoughts cling and cluster round the cross as bees do around the hive, and for the same reason,—for there is the honey. “How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” Not that *all* his thoughts are good; yet he can say, with David, “I hate vain thoughts.” Then there are the *desires*: “there be many who say, “Who will show me any good?” These seek happiness in the pleasures of sin, or in the things of time and sense only; but the spiritual man is saying, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;” “Oh, visit me with thy salvation, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thy inheritance,” and with Paul, “that I may win Christ, and be found in him;” or with the church they are saying, “Our desire is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name.” Another test is *gratitude*. While a spiritual man overlooks none of God’s mercies, he blesses him for his daily bread, but much more for the bread which cometh down from heaven,—for corporeal favours, but much more for spiritual blessings. He sings, with Watts,—

“To thee we owe our wealth and friends,
 And health, and safe abode:
 Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
 But they are not my God.”

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We may take another test from the *use of creature possessions*. The Christian regards all these as the purchase of his Saviour's blood. He finds a sacredness in them which the natural man knows not of, and enjoys them with a sense of special favour. And

"How sweet our daily mercies prove
When they are season'd by his love!"

May 8.—*Keep me from evil.* 1 Chron. iv. 10.

A MAN who utters this prayer must know that he is liable to fall into temptation and sin. He may neglect or he may restrain prayer before God: this is sin. He may trust in man, or make flesh his arm: and this is sin. He may fall into vice; indeed, there is nothing too vile for him to fall into, if left to himself. The believer is most sensible of his danger when he thinks of *Satan*, the adversary of his soul, who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is peculiarly sensible of it when he thinks of *the world* in which he lives, which is full of evil. What errors are there in it to deceive! what smiles to seduce! what frowns to menace! what examples to pervert! "The whole world lieth in wickedness." The Christian is also sensible of his danger when he thinks of *himself*; for, though there is a difference between him and others, and between himself formerly and now, and though there is a work begun in him, yet he is only sanctified in part. He knows there are internal traitors, holding correspondence with external enemies; therefore, having so much sin dwelling within him, he feels that he stands in jeopardy every hour. And there is nothing in which we may have any concern through the day which may not prove the occasion of our falling into sin: "Yea, our table may become a snare;" and the things ordained for our welfare may become "a trap." Knowledge may puff up; liveliness and enlargement in duty may engender spiritual pride. Even Paul, with all his progress, was in danger of being elated by his manifestations, and therefore he says, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me." No wonder, therefore, the Christian, knowing the character of his enemies, and sensible of his own weakness, should pray, with Jabez, "Keep me from evil;" or that our Lord should teach his

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disciples, when they pray, to say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" and in his own prayer for them to say, "Keep them from the evil."

May 9.—*He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.* Isa. v. 2.

WAS God, then, disappointed? He was, and he was not. We must make a distinction. We must distinguish between disappointment in fact, and disappointment in right. As to disappointment in fact, God is never liable to it. His understanding is infinite; he sees the end from the beginning. But as to disappointment in right, observe, if a man expect a crop by sowing upon the sand of the sea, it would be very unreasonable; but not so if he manured and improved the soil, and gave it every kind of advantage and culture: he would have a right then to look for produce according to his expenditure and pains. So it is here, and therefore God may justly complain. He is denied his right. To the same purpose is the parable of our Saviour. He one day said, "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." We are not told whether this intercession was successful; but we have every reason to believe that it was, and that the vine-dresser did not pray in vain, for the Father "heard him always," and God is long-suffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Some years ago, a minister had in his garden a tree that never bore. One day he was going thither with the axe in his hand to fell it: his wife met him in the pathway, and pleaded for it, saying, "Why, the spring is now very near; stay and see whether there may not be some change, and if not, you can deal with it accordingly." As he never repented following her advice, he yielded to it now: and what was the consequence? In a few weeks the tree was covered with blossoms, and in a few weeks more it was bending with fruit.

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“Ah!” said he, “this should teach me; I will learn a lesson from hence, not to cut down too soon; that is, not to consider persons incorrigible or abandoned too soon, so as to give up hope, and the use of means and prayer in their behalf.” A member of the church at Broadmead, Bristol, had behaved very improperly, and when reproved was very perverse, and showed such a disposition that at the church meeting it was resolved to excommunicate him. The Sabbath before, Caleb Evans, the pastor, preached in the morning from the words, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” and the man was there, and seemed hardened and resentful. But it so happened that a stranger was engaged to preach in the afternoon, and, without knowing what had occurred, he took the following words:—“Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” The man was again present, but now his very heart was broken, and he wept bitterly, and went into the vestry, and confessed freely his guilt, and threw himself upon the mercy of the church, and they were satisfied with only suspending him for a season. Here we may see how the goodness of God leadeth to repentance.

May 10.—*The Lord thy God in the midst of thee.*
Zeph. iii. 17.

THE name of the church is Jehovah-shammah,—the Lord is there. “But will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth?” This was the language of Solomon at the dedication of the temple; and it was not the language of uncertainty and doubt, but of wonder and admiration. When we reflect upon God’s greatness, his excellency and his holiness, and upon our meanness and vileness, we may well exclaim, with Solomon’s father, “Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” But is he not *everywhere*? “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” saith the Lord. “Whither can we go from his Spirit, or flee from his presence?” David recognises him as about his path, and as being acquainted with all his ways, and words, and thoughts. Yes, and we should remember that when his presence is spoken of in a way of promise and privilege it is to be always distinguished from the perfection of his nature or his omnipresence. It is his special

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and gracious presence which is then intended, in which sense he is said to be “far from the wicked,” but “nigh unto all them that call upon his name, to all that call upon him in truth.” Not as a mere observer and witness,—this is common to the wicked, as well as to themselves,—but as their Friend, their Helper, and their Saviour. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Thus he is in the midst of the church universal; and thus he is in the midst of every assembly of his people; and thus he is in the midst of every individual believer, dwelling in his heart by faith. Thus he is in the midst of them, as the sun is in the midst of a garden, producing the fragrance, and the flowers, and the fruits; and in the midst of them as the soul is in the midst of the body, enlivening every member and penetrating every part. Upon this principle it was that Isaiah called upon the church to praise God:—“Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” Hence their security and happiness:—“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early.” Hence the great groundlessness of the believer’s fears:—“Fear not, for I am with thee;” “He is at thy right hand, and therefore thou shalt not be moved.” The disciples in the storm imagined they were going to the bottom, and they repaired to the Saviour, saying, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” What faithlessness! what folly! Was not he on board? If they sunk, he must sink too. His presence, therefore, was their security; and it is ours; and, “because he lives, we shall live also.”

May 11.—*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Phil. ii. 4.

“EVERY one for himself, and God for us all.” Now, this is a pernicious maxim; and yet we are continually hearing it, and it contains the experience, it breathes the very soul of the philosophy, the morality, the religion, of thousands in this fallen, selfish world. But we are not to follow a multitude to do evil; we are to follow after righteousness, and things by which we may edify one another; to act from principle, and from Christian principle, too. And therefore our attention is directed to another maxim, and instead of saying, “Every one for himself, and God

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for us all," we say, "Every one for another, and God for us all." This was the maxim of the inspired apostle; whence his address to the Corinthians:—"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth;" and also the words before us:—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." If a female were urged to be virtuous, or a man exhorted not to love money, or not to steal, it would probably be considered a charge, or, at least, an insinuation. But exhortation does not always imply censure or reflection; yea, it is not always an excitement to begin, but frequently an encouragement to persevere and to increase, in well-doing; for when a thing is lovely we always wish it to be more so, and we naturally desire that excellency of every kind may have "free course and be glorified." Hear the language of the apostle to the Thessalonians:—"But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." And to whom was the passage before us addressed? To the Philippians,—a church remarkably dear to the apostle, and whose members were pre-eminent for the qualifications here named. This is the only one of the apostle's epistles that contains nothing of blame; and never was there a people more disinterested than these Philippians. Let us observe this one particular instance in their liberality towards the apostle himself:—"Now, ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only." "But I have all and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." These very people, these unselfish and generous souls, these are the people he admonishes in the words:—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." How is this to be understood? Why, he explains himself; we are not to look upon them exclusively or only. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also" (this is the interpretation) "on the things of others." It is much therefore like

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the second commandment:—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Our Lord, too, confirms the requisition:—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets." Self-preservation—including the promotion of our welfare, as well as the conservation of our being,—self-preservation has been called the first law of nature, and it is so; and if man were a solitary creature it would be the only law of nature. There would be no other for him to care for than his own dear self; but now, man is variously associated and related, and therefore he is made a social being, and consequently is required to be social. Therefore he is told that "no man liveth to himself," and only a Cain will ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

May 12.—*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Phil. ii. 4.

LET us inquire,—First, How are we to look on the things of others? In answer to this we would observe, we are not to look upon them *inquisitively*. We are not to pry into other people's history, their condition and circumstances, from mere curiosity, or vanity of mind, or in order to furnish materials for the tongue. If this be not absolute vice, it is a great vexation, and great impertinence; and it is found to prevail principally among women who have no families, and men who have no business, and all those who do nothing and have nothing to do; for, as Watts observes,—

"Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do."

"And," says Bishop Hall, "our idle days are always the devil's busiest ones." Paul therefore says, speaking to the Thessalonians, "We hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." If persons will conduct themselves uncivilly, if they will draw upon themselves reproach by meddling with the concerns of every one rather than their own, let them bear the consequences; but let it not be supposed that it is religion that makes them uncivil, but the want of it. Let them remember the language of the Apostle Peter:—"Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an

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evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." Again, we are not to look upon them *enviously*. "Be not thou afraid," says David, "when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his own soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." It is as if he should say, Envyng others on account of the distinctions and acquisitions around you is not worthy of you. What is man the better for them? But, oh, what evil is there in that temper to the person himself! It is earthly, sensual, devilish. Milton describes Satan as looking on the happiness of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and then turning away with a malignant leer. What a wretched, cursed disposition is this, for a man to be uneasy because another is at his ease; to be miserable because another is happy, and to dislike him just in proportion as by his excellency and success he should love and rejoice in him! Yet this principle is so common, it is so powerful and subtle in its various workings, that Solomon says, "Who can stand before envy?" We are not to look upon the things of others *unconcernedly*, but so as to feel for them, so as to have an interest in them by sympathy, so as to make them in a sense our own, so that if the subjects of them rejoice we may "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Common sense tells us what must be the meaning of the apostle here; that when he says, "Look on the things of others," he cannot mean with such a look as the priest and the Levite gave to the poor, wounded traveller, and then went to the other side; but he must mean such a look as that the eye should affect the heart; such a look as should awaken commiseration and produce corresponding emotions and exertions.

May 13.—*Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.*

1 Tim. vi. 8.

HAPPINESS does not depend upon external things, but upon the principle and disposition of the mind, and therefore its acquisition is as possible to us, in our present condition, as in any imaginable one. If we make our observations of those who have

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risen from poverty to affluence, shall we find that they have advanced in contentment as they have increased in wealth or honour? They have gained by their ascent greater and more awful responsibility—more arduous duty—more anxious solicitude—more exposedness to temptation. But what have they gained in solid satisfaction, or in mental tranquillity? How often have they thought of the “dangers that are past” with regret? What says Solomon, after a thousand trials?—“All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” The things of earth were never designed to satisfy us. God never intended his people should find happiness in any thing short of himself. In vain, therefore, do we “seek the living among the dead.” In every such pursuit we resemble children ascending hill after hill to catch the sky, which rests on none of them; or a number of patients who, by a change of posture, are seeking relief which can only come from an inward cure. We too frequently blame our position for what is wrong in ourselves, and forget that the ground of our discontent is not our wants, but our wishes. There is scarcely any condition so low but may satisfy our wants, and there is none so high as to satisfy our desires. If we live according to the laws of nature, reason, and religion, we shall never be poor; if we live according to those of fancy and opinion, we shall never be rich. Let us, therefore, cultivate happiness within, not seeking it in a superior station, but in a contented mind, reducing our wishes rather than enlarging our means; making the most of present enjoyment and of actual possession, in distinction from future and imaginary. Let us learn with the apostle “both how to be abased, and how to abound,” in all our affairs confiding in the providence of our heavenly Father, as concerned in fixing the bounds of our habitation, and as engaged in making “all things work together for our good.” We should ever remember that “this is not our rest;” that we are only strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and that in a very little time it will be a matter of indifference to us whether we have been poor or rich, splendid or obscure. A well-grounded hope of heaven will reconcile us to any privations we maybe called to bear upon earth; and, should we even walk in the midst of trouble, this will revive us, and we shall be enabled to say, “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

May 14.—*He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.* 1 Cor. ii. 15.

WE have here a distinction to exemplify:—"Yet he himself is judged of no man." This distinction may not be so peculiar as at first it may appear. A person has acquired a certain art, and another, ignorant of that art, calls in question the other's proficiency in it; and he says, "I am not to be judged by such as you." The higher and more peculiar the sphere in which any one moves, the more difficult must it be to judge him. How could Handel be judged of properly by a clown or a novice in the principles of music? It is always peculiarly difficult to judge a man morally and religiously, for we are ignorant of a thousand things which may lead to extenuate or condemn; therefore our Saviour says, "Judge not," and afterwards applauds judgment:—"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." But the spiritual man is absolutely inexplicable to the natural man. He is "a new creature," and not, therefore, to be judged of by the old rules and principles. His "life is hid with Christ in God." The Saviour says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, which no man knoweth save he who receiveth it." "The Spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." That is, he knows them, but they know not him. He has been in their condition, but they have not been in his. He is no stranger to their experience, but they are perfect strangers to his. He knows their language, but they do not understand his. No; the greater part of his religion must be secret and unobserved by the world. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddeth not with its joy."

May 15.—*I am as a wonder unto many.* Ps. lxxi. 7.

WHAT the Psalmist here says concerning himself may be said by Christians now, for "they are men wondered at." The men of the world wonder at the Christians' *preferences*. They think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot; that they can so readily dispense with those diversions and amusements which seem almost necessary to their very existence:

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but they know not what it is that has weaned them from it all,—that it is the discovery of something infinitely superior; otherwise they would not wonder that a man should leave the filthy puddle for the spring of living waters, or quit the dunghill to ascend a throne. Then they wonder that Christians should find such delight in the *exercises of the Lord's day*; that they should hail it as the day the best of all the seven, “and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable,” while they are saying, “What a weariness it is! when will it be over?” They know nothing of the spiritual taste Christians possess, nothing of their love to God; otherwise they would not wonder that they find such delight in approaching unto him, while they say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee.” Their expressions under affliction often perplex the people of the world. They see them in their patience possessing their souls, that while they moan they do not murmur. They see their afflictions, but they do not see their consolations; they see their various burdens, and often wonder they do not sink under them; but they know nothing of the everlasting arms underneath them; how that the “eternal God is their refuge, and that he has made with them an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,” when he makes not other things to grow. They know not how they call upon him in a day of trouble, and that he “strengthens them with strength in their souls, and that while in the world they have tribulation in him they have peace.” Their *conduct* is often equally puzzling to them. They wonder to see them following a course which is not likely to gain them worldly advantage, but which exposes them to endure reproach and self-denial. They know not the lever that moves them, and are unacquainted with the love of Christ, that sets all in motion: if they knew this, they would not wonder that it should constrain them to love him in return. Neither can they judge of the *system of doctrine* which they hold: the truths and promises seem in their view to lead to licentiousness; yet the believers of them lead the strictest of all lives, and their liberality is known unto all. Thus it is that Christians perplex others and cause them to wonder. It is to their honour and their distinction that they are “wonders unto many.”

May 16.—*For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.* Col. i. 19.

CONCERNING this fulness we may observe that it may be characterized as human, divine, and mediatorial. First, As *human*, the Saviour had in him a fulness of personal qualifications to prepare him for his work and office. Of these mention is made by the Prophet Isaiah:—"And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." Thus the Spirit is given without measure unto him. Secondly, As *divine*, he possessed the fulness of divine perfections. If there be any truth or meaning in the Bible, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness, goodness, and truth are all attributes of him who was laid in a manger and who died on the cross, for "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" and indeed, unless he was divine as well as human, he could not have an all-sufficiency in his work to obtain eternal redemption for us,—of efficacy in his blood to wash away all our offences, and of power in his arm to succour and preserve us. But all this he possesses; and he will ultimately bring all his people to himself in glory, where they shall be filled with eternal satisfaction and enjoyment. Thirdly, He possessed a fulness as *mediator*. He had a fulness of communicative grace. Paul said to the Galatians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." For we may observe that one design of the Saviour's sacrifice was to lodge the whole dispensation of the Spirit—in its miraculous gifts, in its ordinary operations, and in its enlightening, sanctifying, comforting, and sealing influences—in the hands of the Redeemer, and to annex the administration of it to his office forever. Therefore the apostle said to the Jews, "Him being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." "God hath exalted him at his own right hand to be a Prince and

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a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." "He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." "He ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Hence we may compare his fulness with the fulness of the saints, for there is a fulness ascribed even to them in the Scriptures. Stephen is said to be "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." Paul tells the Romans that they were "filled with all knowledge and goodness;" and he tells the Philippians that they were "filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." But there is an immense difference between his fulness and their fulness. Their fulness is but as a lamp; while his fulness is a sun, always shining with undiminished rays. Their fulness is a vessel, while his is a fountain, always flowing and always full. They have some things in them good, while he has every thing in him that is excellent. All that is in them is defective; every thing in him is complete. They have only enough for themselves; he has enough for others and for all, enough for evermore.

May 17.—For it pleased the Father *that in him should all fulness dwell*. Col. i. 19.

LET us consider the reasonableness of this appointment. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." And what pleases him should always please us. We should always remember, though he acts as a Sovereign, and the reason of his proceedings may be "far above, out of our sight," that he has reasons which are all satisfactory to him, and will be satisfactory to us when they are developed. Our Lord therefore says, in his intercessory prayer, "I thank thee, O Father,"—not because thou wilt, but—"because it seemed good in thy sight." What seems good to us may be evil; but what seems good to God must be good, for "his understanding is infinite." With regard to his dispensations, therefore, when we cannot walk by sight we should seek to walk by faith, knowing that he cannot do any thing but what is right. There are three reasons which may be assigned why it "hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell." First, To render it *most secure*. God

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trusted one man, but he will never trust another. He left Adam to his own standing; but he soon fell a victim to temptation, became a bankrupt, and ruined all his posterity. But the everlasting covenant made between himself and his Son is “ordered in all things and sure;” and we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Thus all true believers in him are safe and secure:—“they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand.” Secondly, To render it *more encouraging*. “Speak thou to us, and we will hear; let not God speak to us, lest we die,” said the Jews to Moses, when they were filled with terror at the display of God’s majesty. When we consider God’s greatness and his purity, we feel our need of a mediator between us and him; but we do not need a mediator between us and Christ; and it is well we do not. “We may come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We may come to him just as we are,—ungodly to be justified, unholy to be sanctified, and impoverished to be enriched. And what a pleasing consideration is it that in all the concerns of religion we have immediately to do with Him

“Whose heart is made of tenderness,
Whose bowels melt with love”!

Then, thirdly, “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,” to render it *most beneficial*. Thus is established an important intercourse between him and us. This state of things brings us continually to him. If we have any trial to bear, any duty to discharge, or any enemy to conquer, we must always away to him. Now, of what importance is this! Take a child that cannot sustain itself: is he then abandoned? No; he is provided for, and provision is made for him in the bosom of one who will always give him a welcome and frequently invite his access; and so the mutual action of giving and receiving endears the mother to the child, and the child to the mother. Just so, in consequence of this economy, there is communion between Christ and his people; and this communion is infinitely honourable to him and beneficial to them.

May 18.—*Look to yourselves.* 2 John 8.

REASON and Scripture combine to enforce upon us self-attention; and therefore we may observe, First, That we may and ought to look upon our own things *as to the soul*. To see that it be pardoned and renewed, that we have a title to heaven, a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, that we are fed with the bread of life and clothed with the garments of salvation. Here, indeed, our care should be supreme. Secondly, We may and ought to look on our own things *as to our bodily health*; to maintain a rational care of it in the use of proper means: for health is a most invaluable blessing; it is the salt that seasons and the honey that sweetens every other enjoyment. It is to be valued, not only on the ground of enjoyment, (for what would affluence be without health?) but also on the score of usefulness. How many of the duties of life and religion must be either improperly discharged or entirely abandoned, if the poor frame be disordered, and if, like Job, it be made to possess “months of vanity”! The apostle therefore tells us that life is a part of the Christian’s treasure. “Life,” says he, “is yours,” and the saints on earth possess one privilege above the saints in heaven; they who are glorified have lost all their opportunities of doing good; they cannot exercise candour towards those who differ from them, they cannot forgive injuries, they cannot relieve distress, they cannot instruct the ignorant, they cannot convert the vicious. “The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.” Thirdly, We are required to be *regardful of our reputation*. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.” The man who makes free with his reputation not only sacrifices his comfort but his usefulness. Character is credit; it gives weight to a man’s counsel and advice; and, as professors of religion, we should never give place to the maxim, “Oh, I care not what people say of me.” We ought to care what people say of us: our religion is involved in it; the way of truth may be evil spoken of; the worthy name by which we are called may be blasphemed; we may prove stumbling-blocks to the weak and distress the strong; we may discourage the hearts and weaken

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the hands of God's ministers. A Christian is like a female: he is not only to maintain purity, but delicacy; like her, so is he; to be suspected is almost as bad as to be convicted; and in both of them carelessness is a crime. Hence, says the apostle, "Avoid the appearance of evil." Neither may we be careless as to the *welfare, of our families*. In regard to this, it may be enough to repeat the language of the apostle:—"He that provideth not for his own, and specially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." We therefore only remark, further, that in their secular *concerns* Christians may look upon their own things. They are, indeed, required to abide with God in their callings; but the God in whom they abide will never make them unprincipled, and imprudent, and foolish, and slothful in their worldly matters. "Mind thy business," says Franklin, "and thy business will mind thee." The apostle, in addressing the Romans, calls upon them to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," and yet, says he, "not slothful in business." Paul would have a tradesman a morning-man; he would have him punctual, regular, obliging, active, intelligent. Why should the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? "If a Christian man," says Newton, "be a tradesman, I would have him be the cleverest tradesman in the nation. Yea," says he, "if he be only a blacker of shoes, I would have him to be the best in the whole parish."

May 19.—*My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean? 2 Kings v. 13.*

WHEN Elisha, in answer to the application of Naaman, said to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean," Naaman was wroth, and went away in a rage; and so he nearly missed his cure. And there are many Naamans still living, who when they begin to think of religion, or to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" turn away from the simplicity of God's provision and appointments, and think that some devices of their own are superior. Some have even contended for their own innocence; not, indeed, that they are absolutely innocent,—this they know it is impossible to prove, for "all

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have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”—but they are, in their own esteem, partially and comparatively innocent. If their lives have been bad, “their hearts have been good; if they are not saved, what is to become of others?” Thus the Pharisee stood and prayed with himself:—“God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers, or even as this publican.” There are others, whose hopes are made up of outward reformation, external formalities, alms-deeds, penances, and mortifications. These are what they call good works, and upon which they depend; in regard to which it may be observed, that many of these are not good in themselves, not enjoined in Scripture, and not acceptable to God,—because they flow not from faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. And even those which are really good, instead of being a part of the building, they are made the foundation, and therefore to be condemned, for the apostle says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” These, when placed as the ground of our hope, and when put in the room of Christ, become abominable in the sight of God, seeing they are subversive of the whole scheme of the gospel. “They frustrate the grace of God,” and “make Christ to have died in vain.” There are also some who are trusting for salvation to the absolute mercy and goodness of God; but all we know of the mercy of God is through the Mediator. We acknowledge the greatness and the freeness of God’s mercy, and that it is the source of our salvation; but the question is not as to the origin of our salvation, but as to the method and the medium of it. The question here is, First, Whether God has a right to determine the way in which he shall exercise his mercy towards the guilty, as we can have no claim upon him. Secondly, Whether he is not the only infallible judge of what regards his own glory and our welfare; and whether he, having so determined, has revealed his determination. Of this we are assured again and again:—that he will have mercy on sinners only through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ. Nothing therefore but ignorance and pride can lead any to oppose this determination; nor can any thing but ruin and wretchedness be the result, seeing he has revealed the fact that there is salvation in none other,—that “there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus.”

May 20.—*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* Matt. v. 11.

“THE world knoweth us not,” says the Apostle John: and this accounts for the mistaken opinions and divers misrepresentations of Christians by the men of the world. And yet they are very free in speaking of them; for we always find some ready to speak of things of which they know nothing. Hence our Lord here forewarns his disciples of being evil spoken of, assuring them that, though men will say all manner of evil of them, if it be falsely spoken they may be comforted under the slanderous imputations by the consciousness of the falsehood of the charges alleged against them. The people of the world will magnify their infirmities into faults; they will take the miscarriages of a few and impute them to the whole community; and when they cannot find any thing whereof to accuse them, they will go a motive-hunting, and, shrugging their shoulders, will say, “Ah! they are no better than others behind the scenes. If you knew them, you would find their holiness hypocrisy, and their zeal selfishness.” But we must not complain nor murmur, but remember these words of the Lord Jesus; let us learn from these to be indifferent as to the judgment of the world. “With me,” says the apostle, “it is a very small thing to be judged of by you or of man’s judgment.” We may respect natural men for their conduct and kindness, and be willing to sit at their feet to learn other things of them; but we shall not think of being judged by them as regards those things which are peculiarly our own. But is there nothing of which the world may judge us? Yes; many things. They may judge of our *talents*, and may be able truly to say, You “think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.” They may judge of something with regard to our *conduct*, and of our *convictions*, as professors of religion. “What do ye more than others?” they may ask; and they have a right to ask this of Christians, because they profess more than others. They can also judge, though not of the feelings and experience of Christians, yet of their *moral and practical effects*. Christians should therefore seek to *abound* in all the fruits of righteousness, and to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Therefore, says the apostle, “Whatsoever things

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are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

May 21.—*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.* Phil. ii. 5.

To induce Christians to seek each others' welfare, the apostle brings forward the example of Christ; and we know that it is far preferable to address a Christian's hope than his fear, and to address his love even rather than his hope, because the Scriptures tell us that "whatsoever we do in word or in deed, we are to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Our motives, therefore, and our practice, must be Christian and evangelical; and hence, says the apostle to the Philippians, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." We had no claims upon him; we were unworthy of the least of all his mercies, ill-deserving, hell-deserving creatures, and must have perished forever.

"With pitying eyes, tho Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and—oh, amazing love!—
He ran to our relief."

And what did his interposition cost him? He made peace, but it was by the blood of his cross; he redeemed us from the curse of the law, but it was by being made a curse for us; he obtained eternal redemption for us, but he gave his life a ransom. Therefore, if any are selfish, let them remember, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." But alas! what cause is there for reproof; for, saith the apostle, "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." How few persons are there to be found who are concerned to obtain the approving-sentence which the Saviour pronounced on Mary,—*"She hath done what she could"*! And is there not here also a call for prayer? Prayer for what? Prayer for pardon as to the past, (and there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared,) and prayer for grace as to the future, that we may be enabled more to exemplify our principles, and to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," and that his grace may be sufficient for

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us. Surely there is also need, lastly, for amendment. Let us begin by having regard to the spiritual concerns of others. What an important thing it is to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, to save a soul from death, to hide a multitude of sins, to create an ecstasy in heaven! for "there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth." Who would not deem himself infinitely honoured, feel himself infinitely delighted, to be thus employed? Nor let us overlook their temporal concerns, but be as tender of their reputation as we are of our own. Let us, instead of encouraging scandal, always crush it. And so again as to their outward necessities, let us remember, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

May 22.—*Let a man examine himself.* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

IN addition to the tests brought forward in a previous meditation, by which it can be ascertained whether we belong to the number of those who are spiritual, we may mention that one test of spirituality is to be derived from our *associations*. We mean, of course, *voluntary* association, for this only shows the disposition. It is said of Peter and John, that "being let go they went to their own company." While here we must have to do with the world; otherwise, as the apostle says, we must needs go out of it. We must to some extent be connected with the world, in managing our secular affairs, and in our endeavours to be useful to others. The spiritual man has intercourse with the men of the world, not because of the pleasure of their company, but because his duty lies there; but take such a man when he is entirely free, and when he can act from choice: then he says, with David, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that love thy name." He regards these as the excellent of the earth, in whom is all his delight. Another test of spirituality of character is *conversation*. Spiritual discourse to a natural man is always unwelcome and even irksome. He strives, therefore, as soon as possible, to introduce those things which are more congenial to his worldly mind. But it is otherwise with the spiritual man: he encourages it; it falls in with his disposition; he is at home in it; he feels it to be his element; he

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answers to the prediction, "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness;" "they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." It is said of Archbishop Usher, that he never would leave a company without saying, "Let us not separate without a word for Christ." Thus our Saviour says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And lastly, we observe that a test of spirituality may be derived from *our devotional exercises*. The spiritual man worships God in spirit and in truth; not that he is always in a heavenly frame when engaged in religious exercises. This, however, is his aim, and he is disappointed and grieved when he is unable to realize this. Therefore it is that he so often complains and prays, with David, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." Whereas others draw near to God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; they never think of God or eternity when going to the sanctuary, never seek the Lord's presence and blessing before they go there, and never inquire when they withdraw whether the end of their attendance upon the means of grace be answered. Alas! how many there are who never thus inquire if they have derived any spiritual advantage, but are satisfied with bodily exercise, which profiteth nothing, and with "the form of godliness" without the power thereof!

May 23.—*The great trumpet shall be blown.* Isa. xxvii. 13.

HERE let us contemplate the grandeur of the gospel. "The great trumpet:" it is elsewhere called a "great light," a "great salvation." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" It is called the "glorious gospel." There is a grandeur in the gospel of God, which soars far beyond all finite excellency and conception. The period of its introduction is called "the fullness of time." All things from the beginning of the world were designed to prepare the way for it: as the period approached, God said, "Yet, once it is a little while, and I will shake all

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nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." The gospel regards immediately the soul and eternity,—the only two things in the world which men despise and neglect. The gospel abounds with exceeding great and precious promises; it unfolds blessings that are incomprehensible in their nature and excellency; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The apostle does not refer here to the treasures of glory, but to the provisions of the gospel; for he adds, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Every thing compared with the gospel is trifling and mean. True, the world often allures, but it is in the absence of thought; its power over us is derived from delusion. As soon as we can reflect, as soon as we enter into solitude, and when we are on the borders of the grave, oh, how the world diminishes and disappears! How amazed we are that it should ever acquire such influence over us! How surprised at the exertions, the sacrifices, we have made to carry any of its points! But now the gospel rises to an inconceivable value; it appears to our minds as the one thing needful. When a man is awakened and enlightened from above, all else falls in his esteem. Then the cry is not, "What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but, "What shall I do to be saved?" How shall I bow myself before the most high God? How shall I obtain justification unto life? How shall I obtain a title to heaven, and a meetness for it? No wonder the apostle calls this "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Here we contemplate God as a God of love; here we see the greatness of his mighty power; here we see the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to us; here he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; here we behold the image of the invisible God; here we see why Paul rejoiced in it, as being the "power of God to salvation to every one that believeth." The Romans, to whom he addressed these words, delighted in power; and he extols the power of the gospel. To use the beautiful amplification of these words by Dr. Watts, it is as if he had said, "I am not ashamed to believe it as a man; I am not ashamed to profess it as a Christian; I am not ashamed to preach it as a minister; I am not ashamed to publish it as an apostle; I am not ashamed to die for it as a martyr."

May 24.—*They shall come to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.* Isa. xxvii. 13.

HERE we have the effect of the gospel's influence. "We ever find this personal and public dedication to God in connection with the spread and influence of the gospel. "All the ends of the world," says the prophet, "shall hear, and shall turn unto God; all nations whom thou hast made shall come unto thee, and worship thee, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; in every place men shall offer incense and a pure offering." By the "holy mount" here is meant the church of God. And in this mount all who partake of gospel grace come to worship. Believers thus habitually worship God in the shop, in the warehouse, in the field; for

"Where'er they seek him, he is found;
And every place is hallow'd ground."

They do so in private. This Christ has enjoined:—"Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door about thee, and pray to thy Father which is in secret." He himself was the grand example of devotion, for we find him rising a great while before day for this purpose. How amazing is this! we should have been ready to think he had less need of devotional retirement than we have! Oh, when we have business with One who alone can help us, let us seek him and look to him only, saying,—

"Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn;
Let noise and vanity begone;
In secret silence of the mind,
My heaven, and there my God, I find."

All these worship God in their families too. Like Joshua, they determine that they and their households shall serve the Lord. A most dreadful curse is annexed to this duty. Matthew Henry has remarked that "a house without prayer is like a house without a roof." And who could live in such an exposed place? Oh, how many children, how many servants, may be blessed by this practice! What a source of checks would it present to the head of the family! Can family quarrels abide with family devotions? When God calls us, and bestows so many blessings upon us, we ought surely to worship him. In the sanctuary, also, each convert will say, "One thing have I desired of

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the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." It is by domestic and public worship that the cause of religion is maintained in a country or in a neighbourhood. The careless, the idle, the curious, are attracted from no good motive perhaps at the first; hut God meets them, and he is glorified in their salvation. The sanctuary is always open as an asylum into which the children of sorrow may enter and find relief. There sits a poor disconsolate widow; her little one stands by her knee; she wipes away her tears with a corner of her apron. Let her alone: her soul is troubled within her; she has turned in to hear that "a Father to the fatherless, and a Judge to the widow, is God in his holy habitation." How valuable is public worship too, as it checks the excessive distinctions of life! Here all are reminded of their original and final equality. The monarch remembers that he is a subject of the King of kings, and falls down, before the Lord his Maker; the judge kneels down by the side of the criminal, and says, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

May 25.—*Let the heart, of them rejoice that seek the Lord.*

Ps. cv. 3.

HAPPINESS is a thing to which none are indifferent. All persons profess to be seeking it, contriving in one way or another to acquire something in which they may rejoice; hut only the Christian is in possession of the important secret. The Christian's joy alone is worthy the name. This joy is full, permanent, and pure; and it is to be found only in the Lord, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is the "hidden manna," the "bread of heaven," "angels' food,"—yea, more: for

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

This joy is *indispensable*. What can we do without this joy? It will cheer us in adversity, and give additional zest to the enjoyments which prosperity provides; it will lend an additional charm to the smiles of youth, while it will strengthen and sustain us in the decays, privations, and depressions of age; and it will

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shed its halo upon the dreariness of solitude and the loneliness of death. Seeing then, however successful, however indulged, however amused, the human heart feels a void within which only this joy can fill, a craving which this alone can relieve, a restlessness which this alone can allay and soothe, let us seek to possess it; and, blessed be God, it is *attainable*. The Saviour addresses himself to the disconsolate of every grade, and, from whatever cause their dissatisfaction and disquietude may spring, he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Let us therefore be looking unto Jesus, the "Consolation of Israel." In him we may have peace; but if we would be filled with all joy and peace in believing, we must live near him, and walk closely with him and circumspectly before him; for we must not forget that though all the consolations of the Bible are derived from free grace, they are insured only in a course of obedience.

May 26.—*I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.* John xi. 15.

THE sufferings of some are designed for the good of others. Here Jesus stays away from the sick Lazarus, and from his sorrowing relatives. At length the sweat of death bedews his brow and he expires! The sisters are filled with anguish; the servants are sobbing over the loss of one of the best of masters! Here is a scene of distress and wretchedness! And all this is not for the benefit of the individual, but for the advantage of the disciples of Christ. "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." And this has a connection with Christian experience. As Christians suffer in various ways, so they suffer for various ends. Sometimes they are afflicted *by way of correction*. This is the law of the house:—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my statutes, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Sometimes they suffer *by way of prevention*. Prevention is better than cure. Thus, Paul "had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him," not because he was

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proud, but “lest he should be exalted above measure.” He was not aware that he was becoming inflated; but the Lord saw and prevented that. Sometimes *by way of probation*. Hence afflictions are called trials, because they are a test to ourselves and others: they show the real state of grace and corruption. Sometimes they are *for usefulness to ourselves and others*. Ezekiel was forbidden to weep when the desire of his eyes was taken from him; not on his own account, but that he might be “a sign.” So it is with ministers. They are often poor, that they may sympathize; they are afflicted, that they may have “the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to them that are weary.” Thus Christians suffer for others. What is it we most admire in them? Is it their dress, their wealth, their equipage, their abilities? No; but we admire the social feeling; the heart that is tender; the eye into which the tear suddenly starts; the ear that is chained by the tale of distress; the hand that slides into the pocket before it is aware; the feet that lead them to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. And where do we learn these fine feelings? In the house of affliction. “Be kind to strangers,” said God to the Jews, “for ye know the heart of a stranger.” We naturally weep with those that weep, when we have felt what they have felt. We never pass by him that says, “Have pity on me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!” Christians ought never to glorify God more than when they are in the fires. God, by placing his people in trials, designs to show the tendency of the gospel and the excellency of his grace. Nothing strikes like facts. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” By nothing may we be more useful than by the exercise of the passive graces. Christians are called to be useful, and, while they suffer according to the will of God, they comfort the feeble-minded, while, by the grace of God which they display, the inhabitants of Zion may praise God afresh for them:—“For we are a spectacle to angels and to men.”

May 27.—*Of his fulness have all we received.* John i. 16.

WE may observe the *reception* here acknowledged. We are all naturally destitute; what the apostle said of himself—“In me,

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that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing”—will apply to all naturally. The fall left us without strength,—without righteousness, wisdom, peace, and joy. We are all in ourselves as so many cells of emptiness, and neither creatures nor angels can fill us. We can say, with Newton,—

“The help of men and angels join’d

Can never reach my case;

Nor can I hope relief to find

But from thy boundless grace.”

First, let us particularly observe that there is, according to this language, a *real communication from Mm to us*. There are some religious professors who say, “We are for everything in Christ.” So are we too; but here is the difference:—they are for every thing in Christ to remain there, while they remain the same in themselves: but the true believer is seeking every thing in him as the *source*, for we must receive from him in order that we may be made new creatures; and from him we receive wisdom to guide us, strength to aid us, and peace to tranquillize us, according to the promise of the Saviour:—“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;” and according to the promise of the new covenant:—“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.” The tree conveys its prolific juices into the branches. What branches? Those branches in it, and no other. And, says the Saviour, “I am the vine, ye are the branches. Pie that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me—that is, separate from me—ye can do nothing.” Secondly, We may observe the *extensiveness* of it. “All we have received.” It is the language of all the people of God in every age and country, and under whatever dispensation they may be found. There has been only one fountain of living waters; therefore all who have been supplied were supplied from that fountain. It was here that Abraham drank, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. The dying thief drank of

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it too; all the illustrious characters on the brow of the hill, and all the inferior ones at its side and in the vale; all these, if they were collected together, would bear their united testimony to him. Well, this will be the case by-and-by, "when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." In that day each will say, "I was blind, and he opened my eyes; I was dead, and he quickened me to life; I was a slave, and he redeemed me by his precious blood;" and though ten thousand times ten thousand will unite in the song and swell the chorus, there will not be one discordant note, but each and all will say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory forever and ever." But, though all receive from his fulness, all do not receive equally. Even the good ground yielded some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. All Christians are trees of righteousness, but all are not of the same size. How tall some of these trees are! What a space they occupy! What a shadow they stretch around them! and how the birds lodge in the branches thereof! But others are shrubs; yet they too are in the garden of the Lord. What a difference we see between the centurion who was satisfied with the Saviour's word, and poor Thomas, who could believe no further than he could see and hear! What a difference between Abraham and his nephew Lot! and yet Lot is called "just Lot" too.

May 28.—*Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.* John i. 16.

OBSERVE here the *peculiarity* of this reception:—"and grace for grace." No expression perhaps has given rise to a greater variety of opinion than this. It would only be wasting our time and perplexing our minds to regard all the readings given. But we may observe four things. First, *Correspondence*. "Grace for grace" means grace in us for grace in him, for there is a resemblance. As in wax the impression left by the seal corresponds with itself, so it is here. *He* is called "the light of the world," and his people are called "the lights of the world." He is the Son of God, and they are called "sons of God." What is this but to intimate that they are of one mind with him? and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of

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his." The expression also includes *substitution*. Thus "grace for grace" means grace of one kind for grace of another, the grace of one dispensation for the grace of another. There was grace under the law, but that was mixed with severity and shadows: they received the first-fruits, we have the harvest; they had a few drops, we have the whole shower; thus we have grace for grace,—the grace of *reality* for the grace of *types*,—the grace of *substance* for the grace of *shadows*. And this substitution may be exemplified, not only as to *dispensation*, but also to *exchange*. Take Paul for an example. Paul prayed for deliverance from the thorn in the flesh. This was denied; but God assured him that his grace was sufficient for him. Here was "grace for grace." The grace of *consolation* for the grace of *deliverance*,—the grace of *support* instead of *exemption*. Christians pray that their trials may be diminished; but instead of this their strength is increased, while their trials remain. Thirdly, the expression includes *variety*. "Grace for grace" means, not grace of one kind only, but grace of *all* kinds. Believers are not only *pardoned*, but *sanctified*; and in vain would they receive the remission of sins, if left without renovation. Without this we could not have been happy nor able to serve God and hold communion with him. Hence it would be vain to have the grace of knowledge without the grace of obedience, since, says St. Paul, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Suppose after we have travelled far in the way we should perish near home: we need therefore not only the grace of commencement, but the grace of perseverance; and he giveth more grace. Where he hath begun the good work, he will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. Fourthly, It means *abundance*. "Grace for grace" means *much* grace, or, as it is said in the beginning of the Acts, "Great grace was upon them all." Christians not only have strength, but they "wax stronger and stronger;" they are not only renewed, but are "renewed from day to day." Here we have one degree of grace for another, a higher for a lower, an enlarged degree of grace for a more contracted degree.

May 29.—*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

THE apostle's expression here is the most wonderful thing in the world. Naturally, he was the most unlikely being upon earth to have used such language as this. Consider his education, his prejudices, his abhorrence of the Saviour, and his violence towards all who called on his name. We here see the speciality of the religion of Christ,—namely, that it brings confidence entirely free from all presumption. While others are floundering about in the mud and in the mire, the Christian is fixed upon a rock, and his goings are established, “and he has a song put into his mouth.” He has not to stand on surmisings and conjecturings. A Christian has nothing to do with probabilities and with mere opinions. Do you think he should ever say, “In my opinion, Jesus Christ is more than human; in my opinion, he died for our sins and rose again for our justification”? Opinion! I stand upon the firmest foundation; I feel the most convincing assurance my sentiments are principles, my principles are facts, and nothing less. I know that my faith is not folly. “I know,” says the Christian, “my hope is no delusion; I know that my privileges are not fancies nor visions.” Then, What think we of Christ? How does he appear to us now, viewed through the experience of the apostle? Can we think that Paul would have intrusted all this to one that he viewed as a mere man, a mere creature? Could the Saviour have received it, and was he able to take the charge of it securely forever? Why, when Providence puts into the arms of parents a single child, and says, “Take this child and nurse it for me,” their hearts sometimes tremble under it; and when a minister takes the charge of a single congregation, though it may be limited in number, how often is he ready to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But we should remember that what Paul here did, all believers do, from the beginning to the end of the world. Millions and millions have committed themselves to the Saviour to be redeemed, to be justified, to be sanctified, to be comforted, to be kept. And can we think that a mere man, a mere creature, could undertake such an office? or, if he undertook it, would he be able adequately to accomplish it? I would not commit my

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soul or my body,—I would not trust the preservation of one of the limbs of the one, or the powers of the other, to be taken care of and blessed forever, to any man on earth, or to any angel in heaven. Once more, let us commit our inferior concerns to him, since we have committed our higher ones. Surely he who has so ably conducted the greater is also entitled to manage the less; he will not indeed indulge all our wishes, but he stands engaged to supply all our wants. “Thy bread shall be given thee,” says he, “and thy water shall be sure.” There is no one thing that restrains the promise which he has made to us, but the goodness of the subject; for he has said, “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Well, let us then trust our family, our business, our reputation, our health, our few remaining days, to him. Let us trust him for time, since we have trusted him for eternity. Oh, that one great act of confidence, when we surrendered up our eternal all into his hands,—oh, should not that have freed us from our other anxieties? so that we should have been able to say, with Dr. Watts,—

“Our cares,—we give you to the wind,
 And shake you off like dust:
 Well may we trust our all with him
 With whom our souls we trust.”

May 30.—*And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

THE believer's satisfaction commences here; and we cannot help remarking how frequently this is peculiarly experienced and expressed in the dying hours of believers. At this season they need this assurance, and there is much then to encourage it,—much more, we mean, than even before. “Well,” says the Christian, “he has performed already much of his trusteeship, and with regard to the future I can now rely upon him with more confidence. I have often said, ‘I shall one day perish,’ but, ‘having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.’ Oh, how much has he done already in the discharge of the office which he undertook! and now I cannot doubt with regard to the remainder of it. I can now venture, or rather it is no venture now, for ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.’” We may

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consider this as the language of Paul's dying experience. For he was now a prisoner, and he had every reason to expect death soon. His situation was so contemptible, and so perilous, that many of his former friends were ashamed to own him. Some censured him for his obstinacy in persevering; some were ready to say, "What profit is there in this melancholy life of yours that you are leading, and that must soon terminate in an ignominious end? Where, Paul, is the blessedness you speak of?" "Oh, as to my blessedness, that is secure: I am now a suffering man, and shall soon be a dead one; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." I am satisfied as to the past, and I look with confidence to the future. What though my wrists are injured by the chains which fasten me to the soldiers; what though my enemies are going to put me to death: let them kill the body; it is all that they can do. They cannot touch the immortal soul,—that is in safe hands; and as to this poor flesh, it will "rest in hope," and be safe in glory. Let my adversaries reproach me with whatever bitterness they please: their faces will gather shame when I shall be able to lift up my head, and when we shall meet, not at the bar of a Nero, but at the judgment-seat of Christ, for whom I now suffer, and with whom I shall then reign. Oh, let us listen to this child of faith: how he sings, how he shouts, how he welcomes the executioner that is to bring him home! "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing."

May 31.—*He giveth more grace.* Jas. iv. 6.

WE are here taught to view the Saviour as "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." We are encouraged to open our mouth wide, and he will fill it; to ask and receive, that our joy may be full. In applying this subject let us observe, First, What a view does it give us of *the glory of Christ*? How boundless his compassion! How amaz-

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ing his resources! How unsearchable his riches! He is Lord of all. Compare him with other benefactors: how soon would the greatest monarch be impoverished, if all the poor and needy of every kind were to apply to him with the assurance of success! But in all ages of the world "a multitude which no man can number" have addressed the Saviour, and not *one* of *them all* have been *repulsed*, or sent empty away! Every one of them has said, "The Lord, hath heard the voice of my supplications;" and, turning to others, has exclaimed, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Secondly, It should lead us to *self-examination*. Are we partakers of this fulness? The hearers of the gospel may be divided into three classes. First, There are those who never received from the fulness there is in Christ; they have never applied for it. They are, indeed, the subjects of his bounty and of his providence. He has clothed them and fed them all their life long, though they have never offered up one prayer to him. But have we not souls within us, and an eternity before us? Is this all we need, and all we *shall need* in the hour of trouble and in the day of death? The Scriptures assure us that there is no relief but in him, but that in him it is sure. His giving falls in with his dispensation of mercy. He delights to succour and relieve all applicants; he never said, "Seek ye me in vain." In the days of his flesh he said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." If we do not consider ourselves too good, he will not deem us too bad. Oh, let us turn, then, from all creatures, who are but broken cisterns, to the Saviour, the fountain of living waters; from a world of vanity and vexation, to the Saviour full of grace and truth. So long as we look to ourselves, the view is enough to fill us with despair; but on receiving out of his fulness we shall be able to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" for Christ is all and in all to those who have received him. Secondly, There are some who have received of this fulness, but are not persuaded of it, and have never drawn a conclusion in their favour. But shall this drive them to despair? It should not:—"There is hope in Israel concerning this thing." They have a proof of something good, and a pledge of something better, if they have only light enough to see their darkness, and feeling enough to be sensible of their need of a Saviour.

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“Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
 Yet, since I feel it so,
 It yields some hope of life divine
 Within, however low.”

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Thirdly, There are some who can and do say that they have received of this fulness. “Oh,” say these, “I cannot sufficiently or worthily express my gratitude for what he has done for my soul, for he has turned my feet into the path of peace, and my desire is to his name; and I can say, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.’” If this is our experience, we have reason to rejoice in the Lord. Let us remember that we were once far off, but he has brought us nigh; we were once poor, but he has enriched us. We know who it is that has made us to differ; and, having received of his fulness and “grace for grace,” we are thus called upon to speak to others; and we can address them from our own experience and say, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.”

June 1.—*Instant in prayer.* Rom. xii. 12.

THIS command cannot mean that we should be always upon our knees, or actually engaged in the exercise, for we have not the time, and it would be incompatible with other duties equally important; but surely it requires that we should cherish a frame of mind so as to make us ready to avail ourselves of every opportunity for its performance, in public and in private; surely it implies the infinite importance of the duty. Cowper says,—

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
 Prayer mates the Christian’s armour bright;
 And Satan trembles when he sees
 The weakest saint upon his knees.”

It includes, also, what the old divines call ejaculatory prayer,—that is, a sudden starting up of the thought and desire to God. Wherever we are, and however we are engaged, this may be done. We have an instance in the case of Nehemiah: he was the king’s cup-bearer; when he was fulfilling his task, and Ahasuerus addressed him, in order properly to answer the king, he prayed to

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the God of heaven. He did not go out of the room; he did not kneel down upon the carpet; he uttered no words; but he implored God for his influence and assistance. And so must we do in all the exigencies of the day. If we are in straits, or in danger, or under a cloud, we are to lift up our hearts to him. In all our ways we are enjoined to acknowledge the Lord, and he will direct our steps. It is thus we shall obtain strength to conquer our numerous enemies and to bear our heavy trials and perform our difficult duties. In all these respects we shall find "our sufficiency is of the Lord." And how are we to avail ourselves of this sufficiency? "For all these things," saith God, "will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do them for them." He never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you."

June 2.—*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Prov. iii. 17.

How greatly is religion libelled! It is commonly represented as unfriendly to happiness, and at variance with every thing like pleasure; and nothing can be more injurious than such a representation, especially to the young. But nothing is more groundless than this charge; for, so far from religion making our pleasures less, it was designed to make them infinitely greater. And as it was thus designed, so it is adequate for this purpose also, and inspires us with everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, and enables us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; for

"Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comforts when we die."

The God whom we serve is the God of all comfort, and he must be, surely, able to make a man truly happy; and is it therefore reasonable to suppose that he will suffer one who neglects and hates him to be happier than one who serves him? To realize that God is my Father, that heaven is my home, that all things are working together for my good, and that death will be to me the gate of life, must greatly tend to promote and increase my enjoyment of the beauties of nature, the bounties of Providence,

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and the intercourse of life. How many, if appealed to, would tell us that they were strangers to real pleasure, so long as they continued strangers to Christ; but, since they have known him, their common mercies have been sweetened, their very sorrows have been blessed, and they prefer their own humble condition to all the glory and goodness of the world. They have found his service perfect freedom. His yoke has been easy and his burden light. If religion is a yoke, they daily bless God for the same; if it is a burden, it is the burden of wings to a bird, which enable it to rise and soar aloft and possess the skies; and if the Scriptures are allowed to decide, and they contain the judgment of the only wise and true God, and cannot be broken, do they not say, "My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart"? and here the Wise Man declares that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

June 3.—*Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Peter i. 13.

THERE are two kinds of questions: some are for *information*, and some are for *confirmation*. Now, the question here proposed is not of the former but of the latter character; that is, it does not arise from ignorance, but from knowledge; it does not import any doubtfulness, but is designed to express certainty. It is of the nature of a powerful asseveration; as if he had said, "No one will hurt you if ye be followers of that which is good." The assertion, however, requires some considerable illustration, if not proof, because there are facts which seem to oppose it, and there are parts of Scripture which seem not well to harmonize with it. Who will harm the believer? *Will God?* He is able; his very frown—his look—is annihilation; his eye is upon us, and we are nothing. But will he "harm us"? He? Is not he our Friend and your Father? He? Has he not "loved us with an everlasting love," and drawn us to himself? He? Has he not sacrificed his own Son for the salvation of your souls? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up, how shall not he with him also freely give us all things?" *Will angels?*

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They are able to do it; they are called the "mighty angels," the least of whom could wield the elements of destruction; and we see in the Scriptures what they have done to the enemies of God. But, though they are the enemies of God's enemies, they are only friends to God's friends; for "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, to deliver them." *Will devils?* They are able. They have malice enough, if they had liberty; and they have liberty with regard to some, and therefore the Apostle Peter says, "Your adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." But what said Satan concerning Job himself? "Doth Job fear God for naught? hast not thou made a hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" And what said our Saviour of Peter? "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Oh, we need not be afraid of him; the apostle says, "The God of peace shall bring Satan under your feet shortly." Who among the *children of men* will harm a Christian? *Good men* certainly will not. They "who love him that begat love, love them also that are begotten." A Cain may ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" but every one who partakes of the disposition of Paul will say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" *Will wise governors?* No; they know that "righteousness exalteth a nation;" they know that the best subjects must be always those who are "subject, not for wrath, but for conscience' sake towards God." *Will God-fearing magistrates?* No; "they are ministers of God for good;" they bear not indeed "the sword in vain;" but while "they are a terror to evil-doers," they are "a praise to them that do well." But will not *ignorant bad men* injure a child of God? Solomon tells us that "he who follows after truth makes himself a prey." The apostle says, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution." Our Saviour says, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you." There are yet instances of injury which law cannot restrain; and there are dependants—there are wives, and children, and servants, and workmen, and tradesmen—who are suffering from persecution at this very hour. In a subsequent meditation, we will endeavour fairly to meet this difficulty, and

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see whether we cannot remove this apparent contradiction; for this assurance *must* be true, notwithstanding all this.

June 4.—*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom Hove in the truth.* 2 John 1.

MUCH of the New Testament is epistolary. The Epistles are of three kinds: some of them are addressed to Christians at large, some to single churches, and some to particular individuals. These individuals were signally honoured. It is generally considered, if not flattering, most agreeable to receive communications from persons in high rank or station; and still more from one distinguished by genius, or learning, or piety; but to receive a letter from an inspired author, an epistle from John the Divine, how would the autograph be valued, and how sedulously would it be preserved! Yet two of John's Epistles are addressed to individuals. One of them is inscribed to a male friend,—the beloved Gaius. He was distinguished by bodily indisposition and soul-prosperity, and great liberality and zeal. The other is inscribed to a female friend, whose name is not recorded. She is called the Elect Lady. But who was this distinguished personage? Perhaps she was a deaconess; perhaps she had a church in her house; perhaps her mansion was the asylum of the persecuted, and the dwelling where the ministers of the word and the brethren always found a welcome and a home. She seems to have been a person of high reputation, and of some rank, and able disposition. But, whatever her worldly condition, it of itself would never have attracted the notice of John without her character. He regarded her according to her real worth. Birth, and wealth, and honour, are nothing in themselves. But they are powers; they may afford proofs of the power of divine grace in the preservation of the owners, and furnish opportunities for influence and for usefulness. She was pre-eminently pious: the foundation of all her excellencies was her personal and evangelical godliness. She was "walking in the truth." Here by the truth we understand the truth as it is in Jesus. She exemplified the influence of the truth by her walking in the knowledge, practice, and profession of the truth, and in being "a fellow-helper to the truth." Nothing is said of her husband: perhaps he was irreligious; perhaps he was dead. Her children, how-

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ever, are here noticed, and seem to have been like-minded with herself, for they were “found walking in the truth.” How they were brought into the ways of truth is not stated. But John addresses them along with their honoured mother. Whether he had seen them at their mother’s house, or whether he had only heard of them by report, we are unable to determine. “But,” says he, “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.” The dear aged disciple then falls into his old strain of affection, and endeavours to excite an increase of what had already commenced:—“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another;” and then he passes from brotherly love to divine love; indeed, they are always enjoined and inseparable. He says, “And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.”

June 5.—*Whom, having not seen, ye love.* 1 Peter i. 8.

THERE have been seasons when Christians have been tempted to envy those who lived when our Saviour was upon earth, and who had the privilege of knowing Christ after the flesh.” Ah! ye highly-favoured ones, we have been ready to exclaim, you could hear the voice of him who spake “as never man spake;” you could gaze on the visage of him who was “fairer than the children of men;” you could bring your troubles and lay them down at the feet of him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Here are, however, two or three things which should tend to reduce this envious feeling. First, We should remember that *many of those who saw him derived no benefit from the sight.* “Ye have seen me,” says he, “and believed not;” “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” Secondly, We should remember, if we are Christians, that *we shall see him ourselves soon,*—see him really, see him personally, see the very One who loved us and “gave himself for us;” “see him as he is,” and “be forever with the Lord.” Thirdly, We should observe, that, *though he is no longer now visible, he is accessible,* and we can have intercourse with him, and much freer and easier and speedier intercourse than they. They often had to repair to a great distance in approaching him, and much time

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was consumed in the application: when Martha and Mary called in one of the ploughmen to send to our Saviour this message,—“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick!”—he was fifty miles off, in Galilee.

“But we have no such lengths to go.”

We have no such waitings to endure. Does our burdened heart urge us to exclaim, “Lord! I am oppressed; undertake for me”? The groan, the sigh, can reach him “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” and ere we call upon him he will answer, and while we speak he will hear. Yes; though he be “passed into the heavens,” we can hold communion with him; though he be unseen, we can love him, we can enjoy him. And hence the language of the apostle:—“Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

June 6.—*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

I John i. 3.

REAL godliness shows itself not only personally but socially; and professors of religion should study to be cheerful. It will do good to themselves; for the joy of the Lord is their strength, and it will have a happy influence over others. It will be likely to allure them in the way everlasting, and to preserve the way of truth from being evil spoken of. It is not the individual who is walking mournfully before the Lord that will be likely to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and this we should ever be concerned to do. The way of truth may be evil spoken of by unlovely tempers, by sullenness, by mopishness and gloom and fear. Our regard for the honour of the gospel should lead us to attend to the command of our Lord:—“Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And if, under the pressure of grief, we are unable to suppress our feelings, we should at least make some effort to conceal them. “I was ashamed,” said Ezra, “to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them

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that seek him." Now, confidence in God was not incompatible with his asking for such assistance, but it was likely to operate unfavourably on the mind of this heathen potentate, and, because it would be like distrusting the Lord, he avoided the very appearance of evil; and, as Christians are to be greatly concerned to bring others in the way of peace, we should be equally concerned to show that we have something suitable and valuable to recommend. Having ourselves tasted that God is gracious, we can say to others, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." It is this which gives confidence to Christians in all their attempts to recommend the blessings of salvation to others. They speak not from conjecture or from opinion, but from experience; and they can say, "That which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life,—that which we have seen and heard,—declare we unto you." It is this which gives earnestness to our invitations. Knowing that others are still in the same state of spiritual destitution as we ourselves once were, we are to resemble the lepers in Samaria, who said, "This day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us. Now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household." This also adds conviction and force to our testimony and commendation: when we call upon others to rejoice in the Lord, they, seeing our cheerfulness, and knowing what religion has done for us, may be encouraged to try what it can do for them. Also, when they see Christians content with such things as they have,—troubled, yet not distressed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; having nothing, yet possessing all things,—they may be induced to say, "This is the seed which the Lord hath blessed." And when we say to them, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you," they may respond to the invitation, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

June 1.—*Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Ps. cxvi. 7.

WHEN Christians call to remembrance their former experience, and review the dealings of God with them, how much there is in the retrospect to excite and to encourage them to return from

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their backslidings, and to adopt the language of the Psalmist here, and to say, with the church, "I will go and return unto my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." As the dove returned unto the ark because she could find no rest for the sole of her foot, so it is impossible for the believer to know any true satisfaction till he says, with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and known the blessedness of nearness to God and communion with him, he looks back, and, as he compares his former state with the present, he says,—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
 When first I saw the Lord?
 Where is the soul-refreshing view
 Of Jesus and his word?
 What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
 How sweet their memory still!
 But now I find an aching void
 The world can never fill."

He may have forgotten his resting-place, but he can find no substitute for it. To recover his first peace, and to regain his former happiness, he must draw near to God, his "exceeding joy." With him is the fountain of life, and there is enough in him to bless us, whatever be our wants or our capacities of enjoyment; and therefore a Christian from whom the Lord has withholden some of the privileges he once enjoyed, instead of complaining of God, should rather say, with the church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Let such with broken hearts and contrite spirits return unto the Lord, taking with them words, saying, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips:" until he has done this he must necessarily be miserable. And nothing is so well calculated to induce this return unto God, the resting-place of his soul, as the remembrance of past displays of God's goodness to him. It is then he is heard to say,—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
 He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
 Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
 Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

He remembers not only his own folly and wickedness in forsaking the fountain of living waters, but also that with the Lord

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there is plenteous redemption; and therefore, though greatly distressed, he encourages himself in the Lord his God, whom he addresses in the language of the church:—"Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments and a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

June 8.—*They shall sing in the ways of the Lord.*
Ps. cxxxviii. 5.

THESE are words of promise as well as of prediction. God can foresee and foretell evil as well as good: this only requires his omniscience. But God is the author, the sole author, of all good; and therefore, if he foresees and insures this, it is because he has engaged to produce it; for "of him and through him are all things." "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Therefore we may consider these words as containing one of the exceeding great and precious promises upon which he has called us to hope, and which are "all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us." The Psalmist tells us the people of God shall sing in the ways of the Lord. With regard to these ways, we know the chosen tribes went three times a year to appear before the Lord, in Jerusalem. These services were called solemn assemblies, and the people not only rejoiced before the Lord in these solemnities, but they approached him by singing. We have some of these songs: they are called "the songs of degrees;" because they sang them as they passed from one place to another, and from one company to another, thus soothing the tediousness of the passage, and increasing their desire to stand within the walls of their Jerusalem. First, We understand the ways of the Lord to include the way *in which God walks with regard to us*,—his ways in nature, in his varied dealings with us, and in the different actions of his providence and grace, as well as the ways *which he has appointed and commanded his people to walk in with regard to himself*. Secondly, We observe, they not only walk in the ways of the Lord, but *sing* in them. This implies

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acquiescence, approbation, satisfaction, pleasure, delight. Whence springs this singing in the ways of the Lord? We may look after some of the near sources of it. The first of which is *conviction*. It is a reasonable service; and as the Christian is able to give a reason of the hope which is in him, so is he also able to give a reason of his joy. Hence, says the apostle, "They joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement." Secondly, It arises from *renovation*. He is born of God, and therefore hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and therefore he feeds—yea, he not only feeds, but feasts—upon the provision of the gospel. He finds God's words, and he eats them, and they are to him the joy and rejoicing of his heart. Thirdly, It is derived from *experience*. He has tasted that the Lord is gracious: this taste has provoked appetite, and increased it; and there is much to cause the Christian to sing in the ways of the Lord, when he considers his former experience, when he reviews the dealings of God with him, the surprising instances of goodness he has met with, in which the Lord has been not only better to him than his fears, but surpassing his hopes, and has done exceeding abundantly above what he could either ask or think. Fourthly, This singing flows from *fellowship*. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend;" "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Fifthly, This springs from his *prospects and anticipations*. The Christian while here has some Bethel visits, some Pisgah's views; but there are better things for him still in reserve, and therefore his prospects cheer and animate him principally. Oh to see Jesus as he is! Oh to be like him! Oh to be ever with the Lord, and to have no more to do with a wicked world without and a wicked heart within! Oh to be as innocent as Adam in Paradise, and as holy as the Son of God himself!—what an expectation is here!

"There we shall see his face,
 And never, nerer sin:
 There from the river of his grace
 Drink endless pleasure in."

June 9.—*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them, that believe.* 1 Cor. i. 21.

FAITH cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The highest view we can take of preaching is, that it is a *divine institution*; and we are expressly assured of this by the apostle, who tells us that “when the Saviour ascended on high he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” It is a *permanent appointment*. The trumpet of the gospel is to be blown till we hear the last trumpet sound. And if it be an appointment of God, the only wise God, it must be a wise appointment. It displays much of the wisdom of God. Nothing in the communication of knowledge has ever yet been found like a living address from man to man. Nothing is capable of producing so much impression and effect. Hence all our modern institutions employ their orators and lecturers. It is certain our blessed Lord left nothing behind him in manuscript; but he was a prophet, and he was a preacher; and. “never man spake like this man; the common people heard him gladly.” The poor were evangelized, and multitudes followed him wherever he went. If he preached on the mountain or on the sea-shore, there were they. “He came down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth.” “His doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew.” It was by preaching that the nations were Christianized at first; and it was by this means that the work of the Reformation was so successful. By the preaching of Knox and others, Scotland was evangelized; and by the preaching of the everlasting gospel by Whitefield and others, the revival of religion in our country was so greatly promoted. And it is well ascertained, that the largest proportion of persons who have been awakened to a concern about their spiritual state has resulted not so much from reading the word as by the preaching of it.

June 10.—*Manifold temptations.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

CONCERNING the Christian’s trials, the apostle reminds us first of their *nature*. This is expressed in their name. They are called “temptations.” This word sometimes means seduction to

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sin. In this sense it is applied to Satan, who is commonly called the tempter, and we are not ignorant of his devices. But in this sense the word is wholly inapplicable to God. This is expressly decided by revelation. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." There may be difficulties attached to this subject, and there are; but let us walk "by faith;" let us believe simply his own testimony, and ascribe righteousness to our Maker. But temptations, ordinarily, in the Scripture, mean merely probation, or experiments, or trials, by which the reality and the degree of our gifts or graces are made known to ourselves or to others; for we know very little of ourselves till we are tried. While Christians have ease, and health, and strength, and a prosperous business, and while they have an abundance of creature possessions and enjoyments, it is not easy for them to determine what they are depending on,—whether on these or on God. But, if they are removed, their dependence will soon enough plainly appear. If these were their portion, why, then they will exclaim, in the day of adversity, "They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" On the other hand, if God has been their portion while they have enjoyed these, they will still say, "I hope in him;" and though they fail they will not faint, or if they faint they will not die. The Christian sometimes becomes a wonder as well as a grief to himself, by the discoveries he is enabled to make in consequence of the trials by which he is exercised. "Oh," says he, "I was little aware that I was so proud till I was called to stoop; I little imagined I was so impenitent till I was required to seek pardon; I little imagined I had so little confidence in God till I was required to walk in darkness, and, having no light, to lean upon the Lord when I could not see him, and to stay upon my God." But so it is. In walking by the hedges and through the woods in the spring and in the summer, we cannot discern the nests of the feathered tribe: they are concealed by the leaves; but a few of the autumnal winds or the winter's frosts, stripping off the foliage, lay them open to view; they are no longer disguised. And so it is with Christians. It is in the day of necessity that the retreats, the resources, the little holes and the nests, the very recesses of their hearts, are discovered. Secondly, He reminds us of *their number*;—"manifold temptations." "He perform-

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eth," says Job, "the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him." "Lo," says David, "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." So said Paul and Barnabas when they were at Antioch: they told the church that "through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom." "In the world," says the Saviour, "ye shall have tribulation." As if it were to be their portion,—what they were to look for as long as they were here. To say nothing of persecutions innumerable, instances of which are still occurring in this land of known liberty, there are private sufferers from affliction, who, from hour to hour, from day to day, from week to week, suffer on, unobserved by their fellows, are made to possess months of vanity, and have wearisome nights appointed to them; unnoticed by any except that blessed Being, "the God of all comfort," who seeth in secret. Oh, how vulnerable is man! How vulnerable is his body, his health, his business, his reputation, his family! Thus we find that, in passing through life, according to our affections so are our afflictions.

June 11.—*And rejoice in Christ Jesus.* Phil. iii. 3.

WE are here informed of the source of the Christian's joy. Every thing deemed worthy of the name of joy to the Christian he finds in his Saviour, and in him only. Hence the name by which he is known:—"The Consolation of Israel." Hence what Lamech said to his wife, upon the birth of Noah, will apply more fully to him of whom Noah was a mere type:—"This same shall comfort us." Thus we find the prophets of old, whenever they would comfort the church of God, either in her external afflictions or in her internal distresses, lead forward their views at once to his coming. Ah! it will be better soon; ah! his coming will make amends for all. In what a wretched, desolate state was the kingdom of Judah, owing to the invasion of these two "firebrands," Bezin, and Bemaliah's son, when Isaiah rushed forth among them, and said, "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire; [that is, his victory shall be final, and shall even destroy the very implements of war;] for unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called

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Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Zechariah prophesied amidst all the confusion and discouragements and the opposition attending the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own land; but, said he, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” And David considered his approach as a summons to the whole universe to triumph:—“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge [that is, he shall rule and govern] the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.” Hence the message of the angel to the shepherds:—“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And hence the apostle says to the Corinthians, “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” The words are hardly intelligible as they now stand: give them their proper order, this is their meaning unquestionably:—“I die daily. I do so, I protest, by the joy which you and I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, when we appeal, and when we swear by any thing, it is by something that is most obvious and undeniable; and the apostle could think of nothing more so than the joy which he and his brethren had in Christ Jesus their Lord. Therefore also he here says to the Philippians, “We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh.” Therefore, also, he said to them, “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice.” Rejoice not in the creature, but in Christ; not in yourselves, (you are only so many cells of emptiness,) but in Him who is “full of grace and truth.” Oh, there is enough in him to relieve every want, to fulfil every hope, to surpass every wish. Am I lost? “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Am I enslaved? “He has redeemed us unto God by his blood.” Am I guilty? He is “the Lord our righteousness.” Am I poor? “He has unsearchable riches.” Am I weak? “His strength is made per-

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feet in weakness." Am I opposed? "His grace is sufficient for me." Am I destitute? "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and we are "blessed in him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." There is no light—not a ray—but beams down upon us from him, "the Sun of righteousness;" there is no living stream that flows but comes from him, the Fountain of "living waters." "If any man thirst," says he, "let him come unto me and drink." "He is All, and in all."

June 12.—*And rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* Phil. iii. 3.

If, therefore, Christians cannot for a time rejoice in Christ, we cannot fail to observe, they can rejoice in nothing else. Their friends are "miserable comforters;" ministers are "physicians of no value;" the promises are "clouds without rain;" the ordinances are "wells without water." Then creatures all look dismal, and, as they draw back, exclaim, "Help is not in us;" "If the Lord help thee not, whence shall *we* help thee? Out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-fat?" But, on the other hand, "when he giveth peace, who then can make trouble?" When he "rejoices the souls of his servants," every thing is changed around; when he smiles, every thing laughs. Then they learn in "whatsoever state. they are, therewith to be content;" then "in every thing they give thanks." Then they can say, with Dr. Doddridge,—

"If thou, my Jesus, still art nigh,
Cheerful I live, and cheerful die,—
Secure, when mortal comforts flee,
To find ten thousand worlds in thee."

So, then, "they that forsake him observe lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies." "So will not I," says the Christian; "I have found it good to draw near to God." I forsake him? He has "been my help," and therefore "under the shadow of his wings will I rejoice." "When, therefore, many who were offended with his doctrine drew back and "walked no more with him," to try the dispositions of his disciples, he said, "Will ye also go away?" Now you have a very good time for it, if you will; now you may go in company; now you need not blush;

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now there are persons to keep you in countenance: "will ye also go away?" Peter answered, "Go away, Lord," (and this was the sentiment of all his brethren too,) "we go away? to whom should we go?" To the philosophers? they are "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened." To the world? that is "vanity and vexation of spirit." To sin? it leads down to hell by the chambers of death." Shall we go to the Scribes and the Pharisees? they are "blind leaders of the blind." Shall we go to Moses? Moses would send us immediately back to thee, for he wrote of thee, he spoke of thee; and every institution he established, and every ceremony and every sacrifice he ordained, was designed to proclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." "Lord, to whom should we go but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

June 13.—*Yet, believing, ye rejoice.* 1 Pet. i. 8.

HERE we have the medium of the Christian's joy,—“believing.” In the Christian economy every thing is by faith; we read of “the proportion of faith,” of “the measure of faith,” “the unity of faith,” “the law of faith,” “the word of faith,” “the righteousness of faith,” “the shield of faith,” “the strength of faith,” “the household of faith,” “the assurance of faith,” “the profession of faith;” we are saved “through faith,” we are “justified by faith,” we are “sanctified by faith that is in Christ.” Our hearts are purified by faith; and yet some wonder that we so extol and commend faith. Every thing is by faith: “the life which we live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God;” “by faith we walk;” “by faith we stand;” by faith we overcome; and yet some persons are afraid lest there should be too much stress laid on faith. Why, every thing is by faith. We read of the “fight of faith,”—“the work of faith,”—of “the prayer of faith,”—of “the joy of faith.” Every thing flourishes in religion just as faith prospers. And here we are told that Christians only rejoice in their Saviour by “believing.” Now, this will appear clear and undeniable when we remark two things. First, *Faith is the only medium of our acquaintance with him.* Now, though we can rejoice in an unseen Saviour, we cannot rejoice in an unknown one. The knowledge of him, therefore, is absolutely necessary. And from whence is this

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knowledge to be derived? Why, only from testimony. This is the record that God has given us of his Son; and this contains all the information that we can possess concerning him while we are in this world. And those who refuse it, therefore, must remain in darkness. "What can I know of his person, of his character, of his offices, of his relations, of his influences, of his blessings, but from the Scriptures, all of which testify of Him? And then, Secondly, This faith is *the medium of all our intercourse with him*. It is by this, and by this alone, that we deal with him in the solemn concerns of our souls and eternity. Faith is the feet by which we come to him; faith is the wings by which we "flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us;" faith is the eye by which we see him; faith is the ear by which we hear him; faith is the hand by which we receive him; faith is the arm by which we lean upon him; faith is the taste by which we feed upon him. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man," says the Saviour, "and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" and this can only be done by faith.

June 14.—*Only believe*. Luke viii. 50.

WHAT the Saviour said to the ruler of the synagogue he says to us. "Ah," some may be ready to say, "this is easily said, and the Christian life upon this principle must be a very easy concern." But these are very much mistaken: there is nothing to which we are so naturally averse as this. A legal bias is natural to man; and the reason is, that originally we were placed under a covenant of works, in which doing was every thing, while the gospel places us under a covenant of grace, where believing is every thing. Little, therefore, did the Jews imagine, when they said to our Saviour, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" little did they imagine they should have such a reply as he gave them. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And hence says the Apostle John, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And hence said Paul and Silas to the awakened jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is by the exercise of a living faith on the Son of God that we obtain relief for our souls at first from the dreadful condition of bondage to Satan, and that we are

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brought into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God;" and all our supplies of comfort and support in every after-period and condition must be of faith in the very same way; for, as the apostle tells the Komans, we can only be "filled with all joy and peace in believing." We have reason, therefore, to infer that faith is not a very common thing,—I was going to say, even among believers themselves; and Mr. Newton somewhere exclaims, in one of his letters, "What unbelieving believers are the best of us!" Surely there is very little of this principle even in many Christians, if we may judge from the small degree of their joy in Christ. Surely "if they believed" they would be established, and "the consolations of God" would not be "small with them." Surely if their faith was more clear in its discernments, more firm in its holdings of the promises of God, more simple and entire in its reliances on the Mediator, more lively and powerful in its actings, it would draw them away from those gloomy fears and those anxious suspicions which now dwell upon their comfort, like so many moths "fretting a garment." What is the reason that one Christian rejoices so much more than another? Has he a firmer foundation to build upon? No. All these things are the same in themselves, and therefore the same in their relation to us. But the thing is that some Christians make more use of the Saviour by faith than do others. The well is the very same, but they have nothing to draw with, or they have a very small and leaky vessel. The same feast is spread before them; but, as Hosea says, "the yoke is not taken from their jaws," and therefore they cannot partake of it. But, says our Lord, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"Believing, wo rejoice
 To see the curse removed;
 We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
 And sing bis bleeding love."

June 15.—*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* Dan. iii. 16, 17, 18.

WHAT a scene is before us! God had given all nations into the power of Nebuchadnezzar; even the Jews were not exempted: but he made a difference with regard to his own people. "I will correct thee," says God, "in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." He employed Nebuchadnezzar, not because he was pleased with him, but because he was a fit instrument wherewith to punish his people and to execute his wrath. "God guided him, though he knew it not." He wished to please the gods whom he served, and who had delivered him, as he conceived, from the hands of his enemies. An image was set up in the plains of Dura. This image was large, so that it might be seen and adored by all; it was also made of gold, and was therefore a fit emblem of the covetousness of man, and conveyed an idea of the universal regard which is paid to that root of all evil,—money. It must also be consecrated; and in this service there was nothing omitted which could add to its splendour or render it of consequence. The king attended the dedication, and all the officers of state followed in his train. "While all was calculated to please the eye, there was the melody of sound to please the ear. A herald proclaims the mandate of the sovereign, and all must obey on penalty of being cast into a burning fiery furnace. All fall down and worship, excepting three young men, Hebrew captives, who, meek as lambs and bold as lions, with courage that would do honour to a seraph, stand firm and unbending. They are immediately impeached, brought before the king, and asked, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? Do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image that I have set up?" Let us consider the trial of their obedience. It must be allowed that things good in themselves are heightened in value by circumstances. Why was the liberality of the widow commended, while the rich cast into the treasury? We are told that they cast in

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of their abundance, but she of her penury cast in all that she had. The man who is not puffed up in the time of prosperity is the humble man; he who is not cast down when in danger, and when other men's strength fails, this is the courageous man. It was in the midst of this danger, and when others yielded to the royal authority, that these young men proved firm and courageous. First, They could plead *authority*. It was their sovereign who commanded them to fall down and worship the image, and good men must be loyal subjects; they must obey magistrates, and submit to those who have the rule over them. Yes; but here is a distinction to be made. We must distinguish between civil and religious concerns, and must obey God rather than man; and therefore if any person requires us to do any thing that would offend God, we are previously engaged. Secondly, They could plead *obligation*. Nebuchadnezzar had taken these captives from among the Hebrews, and had raised them to offices of trust and emolument. Nothing pleads so powerfully as kindness; favours attach the heart, and good men are sensible of obligations. There is no greater trial than to be unable to oblige a friend. We are sometimes tried on the score of filial obedience. A child has parents who are kind and affectionate, but they are worldly, and they require her to give up her religion. They do not threaten; no, but they entreat with tears that she will comply. To break away from their embraces, feeling and acknowledging obligations, hearing a voice from heaven, saying, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,"—this is the trial. Thirdly, They could plead *the universality of example*. All around them yielded, and why should they be singular? Singularity for its own sake always shows a vain mind, and singularity in little things discovers a weak mind. Decency requires that we should not stand out in little things, but in things important: where a soul is to be lost, and God dishonoured, there we must be "separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Though ridiculed by the people and opposed by the crown, still, the Christian must stand firm and discharge his duty to his God. A dead fish will swim with the stream; it is a live one only that will swim against it. It is when a man can persevere amidst opposition in the right course, and say to his enemies, "If this be to be vile, I will be viler still," that he displays true fortitude. It was thus that Enoch walked with God alone, and amidst opposition. Thus

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Noah was a preacher of righteousness in a sinful world, and Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. In this manner are Christians required to be singular. We should not wait the decision of others to influence us, but say, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and with these young men, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Fourthly, We may remark *the dreadfulness of the penalty*. Some complain that their trials are too much for their virtue. "Oh," they say, "if we follow on in this particular course, we shall"—but let us hear their trials,—“we shall be exposed to the burning stake, cast into the lions' den.” No, nothing like it. “Shall be deprived of liberty;” nothing like it. “Be reduced to want;” nothing like it. “No, but in order to attend the closet and family devotions,” we hear them say, “we must rise a little earlier. If we don't conform to the world, we shall be scoffed at.” Eternal God! these are the martyrs of thy religion in our day! Oh, these disgracers of the Christian cause, who shrink back from trial; what would they have done in the days of the apostles? “If they have run with the footmen and they have wearied them, then how will they contend with horses?”

June 15.—*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hands, O king.* Dan. iii. 17.

HERE we have the principle of their obedience. A conduct so tried, and yet so triumphant, must have had principle to support it. A man under the influence of principle will not be under the control of circumstances, nor under the influence of momentary impulse: if a good man errs, he acts from principle. Look at these young men: they were tried by universal example, by regal authority, and by royal favour and indulgence; and yet they stood firm and unyielding; “they were armed with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” But what armed them? Can we find a principle equal to the effect produced? The servants of God have done great things, and have suffered great trials; and the very thing which has enabled them to suffer is that which some are afraid of,—faith. In the faith of these young men there were three things to act upon.

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First, *The power of God*. "Our God," said they, "is able to deliver us." He is the Maker of heaven and earth; he has suspended the laws of nature, made iron to swim, and raised the dead; and he is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." If he does not find a way to escape, he can make one. We do not look for miracles now, because he does not need them. All nature may change, but his word cannot fail; he can turn the shadow of death into the morning. Secondly, *It regardeih the disposition of God*. "He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Perhaps they thought it probable that God would work a miracle in their favour; perhaps they had some inward presentiment of it in their minds. They had no doubt seen this passage in Isaiah:—"When thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee, and through the fire it shall not burn thee." Here is another support and encouragement to the believer's hope:—the *faithfulness* of God. He has engaged to deliver his people in the day of trouble, and he will deliver them,—here partially, and hereafter completely. Thirdly, *It regarded a future indemnification in another world*. What! did they still persist in their determination, though a fearful death was to be the consequence? Yes, but they could not have regarded it as annihilation. If there had been no other world, it would not have become them to sacrifice their lives; martyrdom would in this case have been madness. The very case is supposed by the apostle, when he says, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable;" "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." They must, therefore, have believed in a state of future recompense. Realizing, as they did, this future inheritance, the conduct of these young men was noble, wise, and worthy of imitation. They knew that they should gain glory, honour, and immortality; and they well said, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Unless we bring the prospect of a future and eternal life to bear upon our conduct, we shall yield to temptation; and it is for want of this that the world leads us astray. When we think of another world, how infinitely superior does it appear to the present life! It is like the sun, which shines forth in his glory, and conceals the stars, which only show their light during the darkness of the night. It was this view of eternity that made the apostle say, "Our

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light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." "What was Nebuchadnezzar, and what was the burning fiery furnace, compared with the recompense of reward which they had in prospect? "Why," said they, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

June 16.—*Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him. Dan. iii. 28.*

LET us notice the effect of their obedience. How did it end? In promoting the glory of the Master whom they served, and the interest of the religion which they professed. When the people of God suffer in the discharge of their duty they glorify God, and show how he can deliver those who trust in him. It was thus that his power was displayed in the case before us. He could have delivered them from the hands of their enemies; but that deliverance would not have been so glorious; and what admiration would this excite! and what inquiries would be made! and how would the people talk of them, and point them out as the faithful servants of the true God! and how would they "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew," saying, "We will go with you, for we perceive God is with you." And how was God glorified in the confession of Nebuchadnezzar! *It resulted in their own honour and advantage.* They did not remain long in the furnace; but those were golden moments. Oh, what peace and joy in God did they feel, and what holy resolutions did they form, while in the furnace? And when they came out, how would they be followed and pointed out as those who preferred the furnace to the worship of false gods! What effect would it give to their solitary Warning and precepts, and to their example! But this was not all the advantage which accrued to them. Nebuchadnezzar elevated them to places of trust, and honour, and emolument; and who would not have done the same? They who would serve their God in such circumstances would faithfully serve their king. When Constantius, the father

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of Constantine the Great, wished to know the character of those about him, he gave commandment that they should sacrifice to his gods. Most of them very readily complied, and worshipped his gods to the dishonour of their own; but there were some who resisted and proved firm to their religion and their gods. The former were banished from the court; but the latter were advanced to the offices of state, as those who were worthy the confidence of the sovereign. This will bring to our recollection the words of the Saviour:—"He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Let us be thankful for the biography of the Scriptures; and especially that we have the example of so many good men set before us, who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." It is a lamentable fact, that there are many who have the form of godliness without its power,—men who make a profession but are without the principles of religion: it is, therefore, well that we have examples of faithfulness and devotedness to God amidst trials and difficulties; these bright examples are worthy of imitation, and should often be held up to view to stimulate us to exertion and to animate us to the conflict. The grace of God is as needful for God's servants now. It is happy for us that we live under a paternal government, and are not exposed to the fury and caprice of tyrants. Education has done much to remove prejudice and extirpate bigotry; but the world is still the same, and Christians "are not of this world;" in it there are many things they must renounce, and company they must reject. If we do not act with them, we are against them, and our lives will condemn them. Well, if it be not possible for us to pass through the world without opposition and enemies, it becomes us to obey God rather than man. While infidels ridicule the people of God, and the enemies of Christ misrepresent their conduct, there is that in the religion of Christ which will support us. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life." Let us carry this with us through life, that the religion of Jesus will prepare us for every event; and while others sink into perdition, the true Christian man will rise to immortality. God will ever support those who stand by him, and, as Henry says, "There may be some who lose from their religion, but none

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ever lose by it;" or, as Jesus says, "There is no man who hath left father and mother, or brethren, or sisters, or house, or lands, for my sake and the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred-fold in this life, and, in the world to come, life everlasting." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Amen.

June 17.—*The paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.*

Ps. xxv. 10.

"THE ways of the Lord" here mean the way in which God walks with regard to us. His ways in *nature*, in the seasons of the year, in the beauties of creation, in the produce of the garden and of the field, in his marching forth in the loveliness of the spring and in the plenty of the summer, to cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man,—producing first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, till the fields stand thick with corn, and the little hills rejoice on every side. They include his *dispensations of providence*. Nothing in the world occurs by chance: what men call chance is nothing less than the wise permission, the appointment, the administration, of God. Therefore we should never forget him, but, as events occur, say, with Eli, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." These dispensations of providence are various; some of them plain, others are very dark and mysterious. Sometimes his way is in the sea and his path in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known. With regard to some of these ways of the Lord, therefore, we are required to walk by faith, and not by sight. David could rejoice in them all. He said, "I will sing of mercy and judgment;" and, however mysterious to us now, we have the encouraging assurance that what we know not now we shall know hereafter; and then we shall be able to say, what we now believe, "He hath done all things well." Thirdly, How abundantly is the mercy and truth of God manifested in his *dispensations of grace*, by which he rescues sinners from the ruin of the fall! This is called "the way of salvation;" and he hath sent his gospel and he sends his ministers to "show unto men the way of salvation;" the way in which this salvation was devised *before* time, procured *in* time, carried on *through* time, and in which it is completed when time

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shall he no longer. This, God himself considers his *highest dispensation*. Here he displays all his perfections, and brings glory to himself in the highest, furnishes materials for the study of angels who “desire to look into these things,” and will fill all heaven with endless admiration and praise.

June 18.—*I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?* Eccl. ii. 2.

THE Christian's joys are superior to the enjoyments of the men of the world. What are the joys the worldling feels,—what are they all but vanity and vexation of spirit? in the midst of their sufficiency they are in straits. We read of the “pleasures of sin:” these “are but for a season;” and as they are soon over, so they leave nothing but stains and stings behind. We read of the joy of the hypocrite, which is but for a moment. Some are said to rejoice in a thing of naught; for all that cometh is vanity: when they have succeeded in their enterprises, every thing within them still urges them to inquire, “Who will show us any good.” If they say they are happy, the experience of the Christian contradicts this; for he has walked in their way long enough to know that there is no peace to the wicked. If they seem to be happy in company, let them be separated from their companions and their dissipation, and left to think and to reflect, and where are their joys now? But as for the Christians, they have meat to eat the worldling knows not of; they have a joy which strangers intermeddle not with; they rejoice in the possession of grace, and in the hope of the glory that is to be revealed. We have seen what the joy of the Christian can do. What doth the worldling's joy? Doth it afford him any thing like satisfaction? Does it bear up his mind under the trials of life? Does it raise him above the dread of death and eternity? Is it not all a fleeting show, a shadowy good, and the offspring of ignorance? Are not the men of the world afraid to let one ray of divine truth fall upon their joy? Would not one serious thought of God—of eternity—strike it dead on the spot? Alas! do not the men of the world, who are seeking happiness in the pleasures, possessions, and distinctions of earth, find that even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of their mirth is heaviness,—and honours, and riches, and power, are but to them

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as so many toys or flowers thrown into the vehicle that is conveying the condemned criminal to the place of execution? For "the wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

June 19.—*Followers of that which is good.* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

LET us consider the characters here spoken of. They are said to be the "followers of that which is good." But what does the apostle mean by "good"? There are many things that are "good." When God had finished all his works which he had made, he pronounced them all to be "very good." But Peter refers unquestionably to something morally and religiously and spiritually good. So does John when he says, "He that doeth good is of God." So does Paul when he says, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." So does our Lord when he says, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things;" and when he says of Mary, she "hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." This is pre-eminently good,—good for us in every period, in every relation, in every condition,—good for us personally and good for us relatively,—satisfactorily and everlastingly good. Now, truth is "good," especially the truth as it is in Jesus; and "it is a good thing for the heart to be established with grace." Faith is a "good" thing, without which the truth would be only a nonentity to the mind, for it can only influence us as it is believed by us. Repentance is "good," and so necessary that without it we shall "all perish." And righteousness is "good," and we read of those who "follow after righteousness." And peace is "good," and we are commanded to "follow peace with all men." And charity is "good," and we are commanded to "follow after charity." But this is not the main thing we have to regard here. If we refer to the original scripture, we shall find the word in the Greek is *imitator*; and so it is rendered in almost every modern version. Let us, therefore, thus consider it. Man has been defined an imitative creature, but not with much distinction; for we find the same tendency in all other beings, and especially in the young. How early do parents perceive this tendency to imitation in their children! and, oh, what a wise

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and watchful direction does it require! As fallen beings, we are most prone to be drawn aside by lying vanities, and to follow evil examples. And therefore says Moses to the Jews, "Follow not a multitude to do evil;" therefore says the apostle, "Follow not that which is evil, but that which is good." The design of imitation always is resemblance. But there may be resemblance without imitation: resemblance may be accidental; but imitation includes aim, wish, design, endeavour.

June 20.—*He will rejoice over thee with joy.* Zeph. iii. 17.

HERE is the love of complacency and delight. Why, can a person rejoice then without joy? No, but the language of Scripture is peculiar; it is full of significancy, and often of pleonasm. "I will rejoice over thee with joy;" a joy which deserves the name. The meaning is immediately, that he will rejoice over them even while he is saving them. This may seem incredible, but nothing is more true. The salvation of the people of God is expressly called "the pleasure of the Lord," which is to "prosper" in the Redeemer's hands. Our Saviour has in one chapter set forth three parables on purpose to display this,—to show that God not only saves, but that he delights to do it. The parable of the lost sheep. The shepherd seeks after that which was lost in the wilderness until he finds it, and when he finds it he lays it on his shoulder, not complainingly, but rejoicingly; and when he comes home he calls his friends and his neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which was lost." The parable of the lost piece of silver which the woman searched for all through the house until she found it, and when she had found it she called her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." And the parable of the prodigal son, in which we are told that the father not only received him upon his return, but said, "Bring forth the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found: and they began to be merry." Oh that we could more fully and implicitly believe this!—that he not only recovers us, but delights in our recovery; that he takes pleasure in the prosperity of his people; that he takes "pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy;"

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that he takes pleasure in their graces, and views in them the fruits of his own Spirit, his own workmanship, the reflection of his own image: that he takes pleasure in their actions and duties; that the prayer of the upright is his delight; that their alms are the odour of a sweet smell; that if they speak often to one another he hearkens and hears, and records it in the book of his remembrance. He rejoices in their persons; they are his children and his friends. "Thou shalt no more therefore," says he, "be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, [that is, my delight is in thee,] and thy land Beulah, [that is, married;] and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

June 21.—*Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

WE have not only the example of the people of God to induce us to recommend religion to others, but we have the authority of God, whose will is binding on all his creatures, and from whose decision there is no appeal. Our Saviour enjoins it upon us, when we pray, to say, "Thy kingdom come," as well as, "Give us this day our daily bread." And if we notice the order of it, we shall find that he tells us to pray for the coming kingdom of God, before we ask for our daily bread. Then, also, we should remember that we have the blessing of the gospel not only for ourselves, but also for others. The possession of the gospel is not only a blessing to enjoy, but a talent to use; and we are therefore debtors to those who are destitute of it. Then benevolence should also plead for this practice. We admire every kind of benevolence; we bless those who endeavour to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick; but what, after all, is the body to the soul? Charity to the soul is the soul of charity. And he that "converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul alive, and hide a multitude of sins." Then the importance of the thing pleads for the practice too. We do not wonder that those who believe that people may be saved, or nearly as well saved, without the gospel as with it, should feel an indifference in this case; but that they who profess to believe that

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for those who are in darkness and in the regions of the shadow of death there is salvation in no other, that none cometh to the Father but by him, and who approve of the apostle's meaning,—How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?—it is most astonishing that these people can feel any alternative between this belief and the obligation to employ all the means and resources in their power to spread the gospel! Then, also, the experience we have had of the value and preciousness of the gospel ourselves should make us earnest to send it forth to others. Oh, what has it done for us! What was it relieved us under the burden that pressed our lives down to the ground? What was it that supported us under our trials, so that we said, Unless the Lord had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction? And what has it done for us not only in spiritual things, but in temporal? What might we have been at this hour but for the gospel? If not in hell, our bodies might now have been hanging on the gallows, or we might have been in prison, or we might have appeared in penury and rags, instead of being able not only to enjoy the comforts of life but also to diffuse them. And is it for us to be indifferent to the spread of the gospel? Then the possibility of the thing also should plead for it; for it is not an impracticable thing that is enjoined upon us. It is not a thing which requires miracles; then our strength might indeed be to sit still. But was it by miracles the gospel was first brought to this happy island? Was it by miracles it was sent to Greenland and the Esquimaux? And was it by miracles that it was conveyed to the South Sea Islands? We have peculiar advantages to send it forth. We are not restrained by Government. We have the remedy that brings a cure in our possession, and we have the means to convey it to others, who are perishing, either by ourselves or by means of others. Let our daily prayer be, “Oh, send out thy light and thy truth.” But we must do something else if our prayers are either importunate or sincere; for they are neither, unless they induce us to adopt a line of conduct corresponding to the object, and dispose us to make use of the means which are conducive to it. Of all our substance we are not the proprietors but the stewards, and it becomes a steward “to be found faithful.”

June 22.—*God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* Heb. xi. 16.

It is true that sometimes in his dealings with his people the Lord would seem to indicate that he has forgotten and forsaken them. But this is impossible; for he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Sometimes their enemies, seeing them in their perplexities and difficulties, begin to insult them, and to ask, "Where is now thy God?" But, walking by faith and not by sight, they are enabled to answer, "We know where he is; we know that he is at the helm, steering us through the storm; we know that he is at the head of all concerns, making all things to work together for our good. He is turning the shadow of death into the morning, and is fulfilling his promise:—"I will bring the blind by a way which they know not, and I will lead them by paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Having himself condescendingly and graciously entered into such a relation with his people as to become their God, we may be assured he will never do any thing unworthy of it; and therefore the apostle here says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared for them a city;" as if he should say, Though God does much for his people here, he would be ashamed to be known as their God, he would be ashamed of the relation in which his people have been induced to confide and glory, unless he did more for them hereafter. Another system, therefore, must be spread abroad for its development. Time is too short, and this world too narrow, for the dignified relation to be glorified and exemplified in. Glory must succeed grace, eternity must succeed time, another world must succeed this; and thus, according to his promise, "we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then the relation in all the munificence of it will be displayed. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." But they shall in due time be displayed and realized.

June 23.—*And good hope through grace.* 2 Thess. ii. 16.

AND what is not of grace? Is it election? "There is a remnant according to the election of grace." Is it salvation? "By grace are ye saved." Is it justification? "Being justified freely by his grace." Is it vocation? "He called me by his grace." Is it faith? "They who have believed through grace." Is it hope? "He has given you everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace." But what is grace? We answer, grace is the chosen term of inspiration. It is the darling word of every awakened sinner and of every humble believer. We often sing,—

"Grace! 'tis a sweet, a charming theme."

and

"Grace! how exceeding sweet to those
Who feel they sinners are!"

Grace is a word for which no other term can be found fully equivalent. It is goodness, but it is more. It is kindness, but it is more. It is favour, but it is more. It is all these,—free, absolutely free; free as opposed to purchase; free as opposed to worthiness and to works. It is in some respects distinguishable from mercy. Mercy regards the miserable; grace regards the guilty. But what is hope? It is not necessary to have recourse to a dictionary for an explanation. All Christians know enough of hope to know that it is an expectation of something desirable, future, and attainable; and these three things enter into the definition of hope. First, The *desirableness* of the thing expected. We may forebode evil, we may expect evil, but we cannot hope for it; we can only hope for good. Secondly, As to the *futurity* of the thing. If we possess good, we may rejoice in it, and glory in it, but we cannot hope for it. "That which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?" Thirdly, The *attainableness* of the thing. We may hope for what is difficult; we cannot hope for what is impossible. There are degrees in the expectation itself. It may appear to the mind of a man more or less possible,—more or less probable,—more or less certain; but it is not in our power to hope for what we deem entirely impossible and unattainable. We hope to live many days, that we may see good. But we cannot hope to live here always:—"For the living know that they shall die;" they know that life is short as well as full of evil.

June 24.—*The godly.* 2 Peter ii. 9.

WE have a peculiar character to describe:—"The godly." Who are they? There are none such by nature; but, blessed be God, there are such by grace; and this grace is perpetually producing a change in the hearts of many,—according to the promise in Isaiah:—"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Therefore, in an ungodly world there are some who may be denominated godly men. The word is often used as a term of reproach and censure. Thus, when professors of religion walk unworthy the name by which they are called, their miscarriages lead the enemies of God to blaspheme. "Ah," say they, "these are some of the godly." "Woe to the world," says the Saviour, "because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." Let us beware, therefore, how we cast a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, or prove a distress to the strong; for in either case the world can and will distinguish between reality and pretension. Yea, sometimes they infer reality from pretensions, and conclude there is such a thing as true religion, from the attempt to counterfeit it. But what is godliness? *It is not superstition.* It means, indeed, a serving God "with reverence and godly fear;" but this fear is not that which hath torment in it. It is not a slavish fear, but a filial fear. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again, to fear; but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," and "have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." *It is not enthusiasm.* Though it leads us to set our affections on things above, and induces us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," it does not forbid the common enjoyments of life; neither does it draw us away from the concerns of the life that now is. It does not erect religion upon the destruction of humanity. It is zeal that warms the blood, but does not burn up the brains. *Godliness is more than morality.* We do not depreciate morality; godliness provides for it, and includes it. The apostle, in addition to our living soberly and righteously, adds, "and godly in this present world." *It is not profession:* it is more than profession. A man may have a name to live

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while he is dead, and wear the form of godliness while he denies the power thereof. A godly man may be contrasted with a worldly man: a man of this world is one who makes the world his portion, is governed by its maxims, worships its god, obeys its prince, and walks according to the course of it; the world is every thing to him. So with regard to a godly man. *He derives his character entirely from God*, and God to him is all in all. Now, such a man as this is with God on the Sabbath, but then he does not leave him through the week; he is in the fear of the Lord all the day long, and every day. This godliness leads him to the sanctuary, and he loves the place where God's honour dwells. But it leads him also into the closet, where he prays to his Father who seeth in secret. It rules him also in his family, and he says, with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He has there an altar for God, on which he offers the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise; he walks by the rule of God's word. Yes, his godliness is not merely a habit: 'tis a nature; 'tis a life; 'tis a divine nature: it is the life of God in the soul of man. Such a man is concerned, "whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God." Now, as to the *degree* of godliness to which we have already attained: we may judge very much of it by this one thing,—by the pleasure we feel in divine things; we are godly in proportion as our duties become our privileges, and in proportion as we hold communion and habitual intercourse with God. He must abound in godliness who is able to say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches."

June 25.—*Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* 1 Peter iii. 13.

WHATEVER difficulties there may be in the way of reconciling the providence of God with the promises of his word, this Scripture must be true notwithstanding all these. But let us see whether we cannot remove any such apparent contradictions. In attempting this, we may remark three things. The first regards the *language of the apostle*. A writer can hardly ever make use

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of a proposition, however just, general, and universal it may be, but it allows of and requires some exception and some qualification. And as to the sacred writers, they always express themselves very strongly upon the present subject, to make an impression thereby, regardless of qualifications and exceptions for the time. There are such qualifications and exceptions, but they are found in other places. Our Lord said to his followers, "Take no thought for the morrow;" and in the Book of Proverbs, prudence, forecast, and diligence are enjoined. "Look well to thy flocks and thy herds, for riches are not forever." And we may observe that the sacred writers express themselves according to the common and natural and the proper appearances and operations of things, regardless of their accidental and occasional deviations. Thus, we read, the "wicked flee when no man pursueth;" that is, they *often* flee; their *principles tend* to cowardice. On the other hand, we read that the righteous is "bold as a lion." He is not always so; but his principles lead to this, and demand this. So the apostle here tells us that the people of God may and ought to reckon on the divine protection. The second thing regards the *probability of their escaping* harm; and we here observe,—First, That religion cuts off from good men many occasions of evil and injury. A meek temper, like wool, deadens the force of a blow. Who but a coward would strike one that he knew would not and could not strike again? Then we observe that, though men are depraved, there are yet in them the remains of reason and courage; the character and carriage of good men often excite respect in their enemies. "Why," said Saul to David, "many times thou art more righteous than I." Thus it was with Pharaoh, when he said to men he had repeatedly driven from his presence, "Entreat the Lord for me." Thus Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." There is often something within wicked men that tells them that truth, and righteousness, and God, are on the side of those they are opposing. We may also observe that though they cannot like in good men any thing that is really spiritual, yet there are other things in them that they do like. They do not like their repentance towards God, and their faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; yet they do like their honesty, and their diligence, and their morality. Even Hume, the deist, thought it was better for the common people to believe the Scrip-

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tures. And once more: though men hate religion, they do not always like to oppose it openly and directly. They know that this would bring upon them disgrace, especially in a religious country, and therefore they lay hold of something else,—something that is extraneous. But when Christians live and act as they ought, they furnish nothing for these men to lay hold of. The third regards *the alleviations of those evils which we allow may befall real Christians*. They may suffer, but we observe nothing can befall them of this kind without the knowledge and permission of their God. All events are under his direction, and all hearts are in his hand. Christians may suffer, but the injury is only temporary. They may suffer, but the injury is only partial. It cannot reach any of their higher interests. Therefore our Saviour said, “Fear not them that are able to kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”

June 26.—*The hope laid up for you in heaven*. Col. i. 5.

Now, from this definition of hope we are able to ascertain the place of its existence and residence. This is *earth*; hope is confined to earth. There is no hope in hell, for there neither good nor relief can ever enter:—“They shall seek death, but death shall fly from them.” In vain did the rich man implore a drop of water to cool his parched tongue. Father Abraham told him that between him and happiness there was a great gulf fixed, which he could not pass over. Where is the wretch on earth that hope never reaches? But, says Milton, there

“Hope never comes, that comes to all.”

There is no hope in *heaven*. There consummation prevents it; there every desire is fulfilled. “They hunger no more, nor thirst any more.” “Then,” says David, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness;” “Then that which is perfect shall be come, and that which is in part shall be done away.” Earth, therefore, is the only abode of hope; earth is suspended between the other two worlds. It is a mixed state of good and evil: the evil is not enough to exclude hope, and the good is not enough to dispense with it. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble;” “Man is born to trouble, as the sparks

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fly upward;" and whatever direction life takes in his experience, it is through a vale of tears. By the fall, man was deprived of the tree of life, of the image and presence of God, and even hope itself was lost; but by the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus, it was recovered; and not only recovered, but improved. Our renewed state is far superior to our original state. By the Incarnation, the Lord of angels is our Brother. In his righteousness we are not only justified, but exalted. He came, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. The object of the Christian's hope is *principally and peculiarly in heaven*. As the apostle here says, "The hope that is laid up for you in heaven;" and with regard to this, all language fails, and all conception fails too. We are expressly informed that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." What do we know now of the meaning of seeing God? What do we know now of a spiritual body? What do we know now of the various powers that may be enjoyed when mortality drops off from us? No; it is impossible to do any thing like justice to the subject. We have no images that can fully express it; we have no medium through which we can adequately view it. No; we have not eyes for the brilliancy, nor ears for the harmony, nor powers to bear up under that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and "flesh and blood can no more understand than they can inherit the kingdom of God." But though the object of the Christian's hope is peculiarly and principally above,—and there the Christian has a better and an enduring substance,—yet even here he has pledges of it, he has the earnest of it, he has the first-fruits, he has the foretastes. Even here

"The men of graoe have found
Glory begun below."

And Watts says,—

"When Christ, with all his beauties crown'd,
Sheds his bright beams abroad,
'Tis a young heaven on earthly ground,
And glory in the bud."

June 27.—*Good hope.* 2 Thess. ii. 16.

THE object of our present inquiry regards the excellency of the Christian's hope. It is "a *good* hope through grace." Now, there are three ways in which a hope may be said to be good. First, Because of its *object*. Secondly, Because of its *warrant*. Thirdly, Because of its *influence*. It is the first of these to which we shall at present confine our remarks. What the object of the Christian's hope is, we may gather from the apostle's prayer in behalf of the Ephesians:—"That the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of your calling,"—the hope which they had, for which they are called by the gospel; therefore he adds, "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The object of this hope, therefore, embraces all that is contained in the Scriptures of truth, all that is contained in the new and "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." It takes in the idea of *suitableness*; it is infinitely adapted to all our woes, to all our wants, and to all our weaknesses. If I am guilty, it brings me pardon; if I am enslaved, it brings me deliverance; if I am sick, it brings me health and cure; if I am poor, it brings me riches, unsearchable riches, the riches of grace. And there is an *all-sufficiency* in it. Its privileges extend as far as the curse is found; for, says the apostle, "Where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound." It is a very pleasing consideration that it is all-sufficient for *others* as well as for *ourselves*; for our dear children, for our dear friends, for our neighbours, for our nation, and for the world at large. It is not a morsel, therefore, to be eaten alone. It is, as Isaiah calls it, a feast of fat things made upon a mountain and for all nations. And it has *duration*. It is "permanency that adds bliss to bliss," says Dr. Young; we are assured that mortality is the disguise of every thing human.

"All, all on earth is shadow."

What can we place our affections upon that is abiding? The hosannas of to-day are the "Crucify him" of to-morrow, so vain is the present evil world. What is wealth? "Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away." What is health? what is our strength? "Our strength is not the strength of stones, nor our bones brass, nor our dear connections abiding." Who has not

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sighed, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness"? But there all is lasting; there are pleasures for evermore. There is not only a crown, but "a crown of glory that fadeth not away;" not only salvation, but "everlasting salvation;" not only life, but "life eternal."

June 28.—The Lord knoweth how to deliver *the godly out of temptations*. 2 Peter ii. 9.

WE have here to consider a gracious assurance, and we observe that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" in three ways. The First is, By *exemption*; that is, by preventing them. This may not seem so easily inferred; but the connection of the words leads to this: Peter is speaking of exemption from sufferings, and shows us how in this way the Lord knows how to deliver his people. Thus, he speaks of Lot being delivered from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, he speaks of Noah as being exempted when the flood came upon the world of the ungodly. Thus, he placed a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites, and, while the former were enveloped in darkness, the other had light in all their dwellings. And so in the prophecies of Ezekiel we see how God ordered a mark to be set on the foreheads of the men that sighed for the abominations that were done in the land; and what an order was given to the men who had a weapon,—not to approach any man upon whom was the mark! In public and private calamities God knows how to deliver his people; and with regard to any trial he knows how to screen them, and will do so if it be for their profit. Thus he says, by Isaiah, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until these calamities be overpast." Secondly, By *preservation*; not only by exempting them from trials, but in preserving them. Observe in this instance that while the afflictions are not removed, but allowed to continue, his people are kept from the evil of them; and there are many in a state of suffering that can only be preserved by the grace of God. Thus, we may despise the chastening of the Lord, or we may faint in the day of adversity. We may envy others who have not the same trials; we may charge God fool-

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ishly, or with being unkind; we may murmur or complain; we may sometimes be ready to look up and curse God to his face. Now, what a mercy is it in our afflictions to be preserved from all this! It is, therefore, mentioned as a kind of moral wonder with regard to Job, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." What a blessing is it to have realized in our experience the language of Elihu, "He delivereth the poor *in* his afflictions," when he does not deliver him out of them! But then there is another way in which he knows how to deliver the godly. This was the case with Job and David, and many others, who could even say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" by *emancipating them from their sufferings*. The apostle therefore tells the Corinthians that "nothing had befallen them but that which was common to man, and that with the temptation God would make a way of escape, so that they might be able to bear it." We see how often he has delivered his people, according to the instances recorded in Scripture. He knew how to deliver Job and Moses, and the three Hebrew children and Daniel. Many of these deliverances, indeed, were miraculous, and we are not now to look for miracles; but he who performed them is the living God, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." He could do now as formerly, and

"Sooner all nature shall change,
Than one of his promises fail."

Well, this deliverance is twofold,—partial here: from how many afflictions and trials has God already delivered us! but now "the clouds return after the rain." "Deep calleth unto deep:" as long as we are here we may look for sorrows of some kind or other, but at death the deliverance will be complete. Death is a blessed thing with regard to Christians: it is from all sorrow, and to all joy,—it is from all evil, and to all good,—that death conducts them. Soon nothing will remain of all the sufferings of the godly but a remembrance of the hand that sustained him under them and that freed him from them. He will then be able exultingly to sing, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling;" and then will be fulfilled the promise, "Sing, O daughter of Zion, shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments,

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he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more."

June 29.—*Show me a token for good.* Ps. lxxxvi. 17.

THE words before us are the language of David; and, oh, how many, since he used them, have made them their own! How many pious Jews, and how many real Christians, have said, "Show me a token for good"! "A token" is something added to a promise. A man promises to do something for us, and, in order to confirm our confidence, he offers a favour as a token that he will give the rest. A token in some respects resembles a pledge; still more, it resembles an earnest, only with this difference:—an earnest is always a part of what is to be given. A pledge is a token, inasmuch as it constitutes a practical confirmation and assurance of the rest. Let us, therefore, consider what the believer is desirous of obtaining. We hear mankind say, "Oh that I had a token for good," that I should succeed in the formation of such a connection in life, that I may gain such an office, that I may amass such a fortune, that I may complete such an enterprise: "what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" But while Christians are at present in the world, and are likely to be affected with its vanities, they are not, they cannot be, of the world as others are. No; they are born from above and bound for glory. There is their inheritance, and there will they reside forever; and they often say,—

"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Saviour reigns."

The Christian, therefore, feels that he is a stranger and a pilgrim; he has no continuing-city here, but he seeks one to come; he no longer seeks that for his portion which is only intended for his passage and designed for his accommodation; and while many say, "Who will show us any good?" his language is, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me;" while he is thankful for earthly blessings, he feels his need of blessings relating to the soul and eternity,—blessings that can afford him security and satisfaction, and upon the possession of which his happiness absolutely depends. He therefore says, with Watts,—

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“To thee we owe our wealth and friends,
 Our health and safe abode;
 Thanks to thy name for meaner things
 But these are not my God.”

Or with our favourite poet,—

“Give what thou wilt, without thee we are poor,
 And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.”

He now “seeks the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and “sets his affections on things above:” now his treasure is in heaven; he has now new views, new wants, new desires. Witness his aim:—“That I may win Christ and be found in him.” Witness his inquiries now:—“How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” Witness his desires now:—“Remember me with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people.” He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He now views the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, which are hanging on the boughs of the promises, and longs to gather them as his own. He sees Christians feasting on the provisions of the gospel, and he says, “Ye are the happy ones: how I envy you! Is there a place for me by your side? and can I find a welcome there with you? Oh to be able to say, ‘Thou hast given me the heritage of them that fear thee!’” Thus it was with Nehemiah; he said, “Remember me, O Lord, for good.” Thus it was with David, who here says, “Show me a token for good;” and thus it is with the believer who is desirous of obtaining this blessing.

June 30.—*Who hath disposed the whole world.*
 Job xxxiv. 13.

It becomes us to entertain proper apprehensions of him with whom we have to do; and various are the characters by which he is represented in the Scriptures of truth. The most interesting and endearing is, “The Saviour of sinners.” The most awful is, “The Judge of all, who will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” But, besides these, he is the “Maker,” the “Preserver,” he is the “Ruler,” he is the “Disposer” of all; for when Elihu asks, “Who hath disposed the whole world?” we are naturally, we are necessarily,

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led to him. Let us therefore consider God's all-disposing agency, and endeavour to improve it:—

“Great God, from thee ive spring, to thee we tend;
Our medium, way, original, and end.”

We see Elihu does not refer to an individual, or a family, or a nation only, but to the whole world. He is the Disposer of the whole world of *nature*. So in the original creation, as related by Moses, it is said, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Every thing was arranged with order and with propriety. There was the day and the night, the various species and productions; and when the whole was finished God looked upon all “that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” And hence the Psalmist says, “The day is thine; the night also is thine.” “Thou hast made summer and winter; thou hast appointed the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down.” “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.” What man can produce, man can comprehend. The more we examine a piece of human workmanship the less wonder we feel, because we find it can be understood, and see that it is capable of alterations and improvements, or at least we find it is limited and finite. But it is otherwise with the work of God. Here nothing is superfluous,—nothing wanting,—nothing can be improved. Here we find ourselves not only on the verge of perfection, but also of infinity. “Lift up your eyes on high,” says Isaiah, “and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” What an arrangement is there in all those numbers and immense worlds which God hath created! Observe their distances and revolutions: even the comet has a prescribed course from which it never deviates. Dr. Young says, “An undevout astronomer is mad.” And David says, “He hangeth the earth upon nothing.” “The earth is full of his goodness.” If we lay down the telescope and take up the microscope, and, after surveying the perfections of God in the grandeur of his works, examine their minuteness, we shall see that “He is wonderful in counsel, and mighty in working.” What perfection is there in the construction of the human frame! what contrivance and adaptation in the eye and ear!

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How well may we say, with David, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" If in the arrangement of things in the natural world any thing should appear strange or useless,—for instance, the disproportion between water and land; between the frozen regions and the burning climes; in regard to sandy deserts, ravenous beasts, poisonous reptiles,—let us remember our ignorance, and think how impossible it is for us to ascertain the end and design of many things; so that what we may deem an injury may be a real advantage or excellence. A certain king who studied astronomy thought he could discover some imperfection or irregularities in the system, and said, "If I had been by the Maker of the world when he made it, I would have given him some advice." Instead of falling into such blasphemy, let us rather say, with Isaiah, "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment?" "His understanding is infinite." "I will," says God, "that men should magnify my works which they behold." Even we lament there are so few real lovers of nature; and where persons admire it, how often do they pass by the workman while they behold the works! Thus they are found to love and serve the creature more than the Creator. If we are struck with a single instance of God's arrangement in the world of nature, how much more should we be impressed with the whole, if we were, in a proper state of mind, and if God were in all our thoughts!

July 1.—*Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.*
Heb. vi. 17, 18.

As the object of the Christian's hope is important and immense, it is obvious it ought to be well founded. A large and lofty structure requires a sure and safe foundation. If a man were erecting an edifice like St. Paul's, he would be much more concerned to look after the safety of the foundation than if he were only going to build a mud hovel. If a man were going to purchase a house in which his wife and children were to reside, and which was to contain all his treasure, and knew it was exposed to floods and winds, he would inquire whether it

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was founded upon a rock, or upon the sand. Now, let us observe what a foundation is laid for the salvation of the immortal soul. If this were to give way, the crash would be heard beyond the stars. Let us therefore look at the soundness of the believer's hope: it is a rock; it is "the Rock of Ages;" it is firmer than the course of nature, surer than the earth or the heaven. "Heaven and earth," says the Saviour, "shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." The hope of the believer is founded on the *word of God*. We may trust in the word of a man and be ruined, but "the word of the Lord endureth forever." We know that human promises often fail; but even Balaam said, "The Lord is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "All the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea; and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." Oh, how delightful would it be to find, as we go along through the Bible, how, though God has often raised the confidence of his people, yet that he has never suffered them to be deceived; and to hear the language of the church, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God;" to hear Joshua say, "You know in all your hearts that not one good thing hath failed us of all that the Lord hath spoken;" to hear Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, say, "What thou spakest with thy mouth thou hast fulfilled with thy hand as it is this day." Again, not only have we, as the foundation of our hope, his word, but also his *oath*:—"For God, willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsels, hath confirmed it by an oath." "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I will no more be wroth with thee, nor forsake thee." A bad man may swear as well as lie; and not long ago Judge Barrow said, "False swearing in this court is as common as the sand on the beach." But sure it is not possible for us to impute lying and perjury to a God of truth and righteousness, and whom we so frequently call the true God, and "whose faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." Then we may observe that that oath is accompanied with a *sacrifice*,—the sacrifice of his own Son. God remembers the blood of the everlasting covenant in his dealings with his people,

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and he says, "By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." A man may promise, a man may give pledges, sincerely designing at the time to make good his engagements; but his means and his resources may fail. But is the Lord's hand shortened? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? If he does not find means, cannot he furnish them? Does he find any difficulty? Is what is marvellous to us marvellous to him? Has he not taught us to sing, "Now, unto him that is able to do for us exceeding abundant above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"?

July 2.—*Who hath disposed the whole world.* Job xxxiv. 13.

THE Lord is also the Disposer of the whole world of *grace*. He hath said, making the comparison himself, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind." Here "he works all things after the counsel of his own will." Hence, says the apostle, "he hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Observe here, he speaks not only of grace, but of the *purpose* of grace. There was nothing left unappointed or unarranged. He tells us that "God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ;" and he calls this God's own purpose, peculiarly his own, pre-eminently his own, which is to bring glory to him in the highest. The scheme stretches from eternity to eternity, and in every part of it we see God "abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence." The season in which the Messiah was to appear was arranged by infinite wisdom, which is called the "fulness of time." He arranged every thing pertaining to the gospel dispensation. We see, in reading the Acts of the Apostles, how these apostles were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to go in one direction, and their feet turned into another. While God sometimes giveth not any account of his matters, he has reasons for what he does satisfactory to himself. The Christian must walk by faith, and say in many instances, with our divine Lord, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." What seems good to us may be evil; what seems good to him must accord with reality, for his

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judgment is always according to truth. Thus he arranges every thing in the Christian church. The apostle, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says, "Now, there are diversity of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same Lord which worketh all in all." "But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The same may be exemplified with regard to every individual who is the subject of divine grace; for, as the apostle says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." So that there has not any thing been left to accident; but all has been arranged by infinite wisdom. The *time* of their conversion, the *place* too,—perhaps on a journey of business, or perhaps on a visit of friendship; and the *manner* too,—sometimes by the impressions of terror, and sometimes by a promise of love; and the *means* also,—perhaps a tract, or a book, or a sermon, or a wise reproof or admonition:—all has transpired according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began.

July 3.—*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.*

John iv. 35.

AFTER expressing his own regard to the work given him to do, our Saviour stimulates his disciples to similar zeal. For this purpose he employs several arguments borrowed from husbandry. The first is taken from the *necessity for exertion*. When the grain is ripe the sickle must be thrust in. The crop must be gathered in. The season is short, and every other concern is expected to give place to the reapers' toil. Now, so it is here. You say, said our Lord to his disciples, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest; and you say well, for so it is. But with regard to the spiritual harvest, the harvest of souls,

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this is now arrived:—"Look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest;" that is, they were to consider the disposition of the people who are now within view. This teaches us that when the attention of the people is awakened, and numbers press to hear, it is a favourable opening, which should excite and encourage diligent and prayerful efforts. The second is taken from the *profitableness of their exertion*. "He that reapeth receiveth wages." Thus Christians are taught that their "labour is not in vain in the Lord; and that their work is important, for as the result of their labouring for the everlasting salvation of precious souls, they gather fruit unto life eternal." And accordingly the husbandman, and those who had been employed by him in preparing the soil and in securing the produce, partook of the entertainment provided at the end of the harvest; so here with regard to the Lord's servants engaged in carrying on the varied processes of their spiritual husbandry, however varied their capacities, offices, and influences, "he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together."

July 4.—*One soweth and another reapeth.* John iv. 37.

WITH regard to incitements to diligence and zeal in the spiritual husbandry, we may ground an argument for them from the *facility of exertion*. There was a common saying in our Lord's days, to the effect that some men often obtained advantages for which others had laboured. "One soweth and another reapeth;" and this, says our Lord, is true of the spiritual labourer. "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." This is to be understood as not having reference so much to the present instance of the interest manifested by the Samaritans, as applying to the labours of those holy men, Moses, the prophets, and John the Baptist, who had prepared the way of the Lord. These had raised expectations of the Messiah, and described so fully his person, work, and sufferings, that the apostles only preached what they had prophesied. And this will apply to the Lord's servants now. Those Christians who are engaged in rendering assistance to the Lord's work are deriving great and unspeakable advantages from the labours of the apostles, and of their successors, the confessors and martyrs, ministers, and godly men,

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since their days. What reason have we to bless God for their writings! How thankful should we be for the translators of the Scriptures! What do we owe to their labours and sufferings! They resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and, by the loss of their lives, procured for us civil and religious liberty. Surely, other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. This should encourage us. Men may be useful, though their names may not appear till after their death; and this should humble us, seeing that the success with which our efforts may be honoured is more derived from others who have preceded us, than ourselves,—perhaps in answer to their prayers, or in consequence of their labours.

July 5.—*He doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.* Eccles. viii. 3.

WHILE the God of the whole earth seems to be doing nothing, he is doing all things according to the counsel of his own will; for he does according to his will in the “armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay his hand, or say, What doest thou?” Now, when we glance our eyes over the world and the present state of the earth, it may appear to us in great confusion; but what is confusion to us may be order to him; what is deformity to us may be beauty to him. “Hence,” says Elihu, “he shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead.” *He* doeth it; he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he causeth empires to fade or flourish, to rise or sink, at his pleasure; and disposeth the whole so as to show they are in his hands more so than the clay is in the hands of the potter. He called Nebuchadnezzar his servant. He was the rod of his indignation, and the rod of his anger, with which he punished the nations of the earth and severely chastised his own people, the Jews; “he meant not so, neither did his heart think so.” The passions of men are under his control:—“He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains.” We have seen the owner of a mill drawing up the hatch and letting out as much water as the grinding required, and then letting it down and restraining it. We have many specimens of God’s providence recorded in the Scriptures of truth. We may take, for instance, the case of Joseph, and

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consider the circumstances of that young man's life. "What a scene of suffering did he pass through! During what a length of time did things grow worse and worse, and darker and darker! We see him sold to the Ishmaelites,—thrown into prison, where the iron enters his very soul. Then things began to turn. The chief baker and the chief butler dream; Joseph interprets; the chief butler mentions him to Pharaoh; he appears before him" and interprets his dream; and soon after we see him step into the second chariot and become the governor of Egypt. Hear what Joseph said when he made himself known to his brethren:—"Come near to me, I pray you; and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life." He observed the hand of God:—"You intended it for evil, but God meant it for good." Then let us observe how the Jewish male children were doomed to perish at the time Moses was born; and how the babe's fine countenance pleaded for him. His parents saw that he was a goodly child, and hid him three months, till they could conceal him no longer. They then make an ark of bulrushes, and pitch it within and without, and place it among the flags in the river; and his sister is to walk up and down carelessly to see what would become of the child. Pharaoh's daughter comes down to the river; her eye catches sight of the ark. "Fetch it to me," she said, and added, "This is one of the Hebrew's children." The babe weeps, and she had compassion on it; a nurse is to be provided for it, and this nurse is his own mother. He is brought up at court in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and becomes the deliverer of the Jews, and the prophet of the Lord. In this we behold a specimen of superintending providence; and what renders it more worthy of our regard is, that there is nothing miraculous in it. Such instances of providence have been at work everywhere ever since; they have been at work in our own history. Yes; God hath fixed the bounds of our habitation, as Newton sings:—

"His decree that form'd the earth
Fix'd my first and second birth;
Parents, native place, and time,
All appointed were by him."

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Had we been previously informed of some events in our lives, we should have exclaimed, "Impossible! If the Lord should make windows in heaven, may this thing be." As to our trials, none of these have been casual: no, they have been all ordered; neither can we imagine that "affliction cometh forth of the dust, nor that trouble springs out of the ground." Job says, "Thou hast taken me by the neck and shaken me to pieces." "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him." Oh, were we able to view these things as God does, we should see in them all his manifold wisdom. "Ah," some one is ready to say, "if he had afflicted me in any thing else, I could have borne it!" But this is the peculiarity of the affliction that shows the effect and design of it. Verily, he has opened a right vein; he has touched a right part,—that which was most susceptible of feeling, without which our afflictions will do us no good. And if we were in the mood of David, we should say, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort according to thy word unto thy servant."

July 6.—*I will direct their way.* Isa. lxi. 8.

WE may here make four suppositions. The first is, suppose our affairs were left to chance. Would we like that? Would we like to rise in the morning and look upon some beloved relative pining away by some mortal sickness, and brood upon the thought that we have nothing to comfort us but this dismal reflection,—that all is left to chance or accident? The second supposition is, that our affairs are left to our own order and arrangement, Should we not tremble at such a thought, and say, "My ignorance unfits me for it; I know not what is good in this vain life, which is spent as a shadow. For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" We have often been mistaken both on the side of hopes and fears. We have often desired that which would have been for our injury, and shunned that which would have been for our advantage. "The way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Our *impatience* unfits us for it. God is a God of judgment. He knows best when to yield us supplies; but, like an impatient child, we desire the fruit before it is ripe. Our

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carnality unfits us for it. "We are so worldly-minded, and our souls so cleave to the dust, that we should be liable to sacrifice our best interests for the gratification of some earthly good. Our *selfishness* unfits us for it. We should think too much of our own concerns, and not enough of those of others. The third supposition is, that our affairs should be left to the management of some fellow-creature. Who should we choose for this purpose? Not an enemy, for certain, but a friend. What friend? One who knows us best. There is much folded up in our character that our most intimate connections know nothing of. Would we have a partial friend? Ah, that partiality would most likely insure our injury and ruin. Then, should it be an angel? When God offered an angel to Moses, he declined to accept him, and told God that unless he himself went with him he would not move. "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." Well, then, the fourth supposition is, that our affairs are left to the disposal of God himself. This is the source of our consolation. Ah, we say, will this Lord of glory condescend to be our Father and our Friend? Will he undertake our cause, and manage all for us by the way and to the end? Oh, then we may rejoice that all our times are in his hand, and all our concerns at his disposal.

"Oh, who so fit to choose our lot
And regulate our ways"

as the only wise God? and who so worthy of all the confidence of our hearts as a Being who spared not his own Son, but sacrificed him for our salvation? Here Christians may find a never-failing source of consolation, and a joy which no man taketh from them.

July 7.—*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord.*
Ps. cxix. 65.

LET us beware of reflecting on him. He does as he pleaseth; he putteth down one and setteth up another. Suppose a fellow-creature succeeded more than ourselves; suppose he has greater talents than we possess; suppose he is placed in a higher situation than ourselves: whose arrangement is this the effect of? And may not God do what he will with his own? We are to leave others to his disposal as well as ourselves; and we may learn from this consideration, "In whatsoever state we are, there-

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with to be content;" yes, "and in every thing to give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning us." Let us remember this in two cases. Let us think of it when we look back upon our past life. God said to Moses, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness." Life would be a poor business in review unless we could connect God with it, with its crosses and with its comforts. Have we failed in our plans? have our purposes been broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts? have we been sent back in life, or put down? Who has done it? We learn from David: he says, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." We learn from Job. Job was stripped of all; yet he says, "The Lord hath taken away." Would Job think of commencing an action against God for damages? So far from it that he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Or are we looking forward? who can avoid it? We know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth; we cannot pierce through these futurities and uncertainties. But we can think of God's all-disposing agency, and say, With him I leave myself; with him I leave my beloved relatives; with him I leave my business; with him I leave every thing that can befall me.

"My cares, I give you to the wind,
And shake you off like dust;
"Well may I trust my all with him
With whom my soul I trust."

Christians may put themselves and all their concerns on board this vessel, and give to God the entire command of it. Let us not, under any circumstances, call him away from the helm, but leave him to manage all, and say, with David, unto the Lord, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant," and "Thou, Lord, shalt choose my inheritance for me."

July 8.—*And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* Matt. xiv. 28, 29.

A STORM at sea is one of the most sublime sights in all nature; hence it has frequently employed the painter's pencil and the poet's pen. What can be finer than the representation of David?

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—“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters,—these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they be quiet; so he bringeth them to their desired haven.” Blatthew has furnished us with two beautiful sea-pieces: both happened on the same lake,—the Lake of Galilee. At each our Lord’s disciples were on board a vessel, and sailed at his command; in both they encountered a storm, and were dismayed. In the first storm he was with them; but he was asleep, and they went to him, and awoke him, saying, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” In the second he was absent. He had constrained his disciples to go into a ship while he sent the multitude away. “He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea; they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straight way Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” The biography of Scripture is very brief, but impressive and discriminating: in no instance is this more obvious than in regard to Peter. Whenever introduced, he always appears before us in his own character; that is, with sanguine temperament and strong passions, exceedingly ardent and bold,—displaying more zeal than prudence,—speaking first and reflecting afterwards. Such men as these have their use and importance in the state or in the church; but it is not good for them to be alone; therefore we always find John accompanying Peter. Peter could animate John, and John could control Peter. The advantage of such a

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temper as this is to act with promptness and decision,—overcoming difficulties which others would stagger at, would reason about, consult, and hesitate, and be chilled, and turn back. The disadvantage of such a temper is this:—that it always renders the possessor liable to err on the side of doing too much, and getting into difficulties and embarrassments. This was the case with Peter, in a measure, in the instance before us; for as soon as our Saviour had said, “Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid,” Peter answered, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” Still, there was affection in this. It reminds us of another instance when our Saviour appeared to some of his disciples at the Lake of Tiberias. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord; and Peter girt his fisher’s coat about him, and cast himself into the sea to go to Jesus.” Love longs to be near the object of its affection; and as soon as he saw his Saviour, he wished to fly into his arms; but surely there was no need of such haste as this. We are not to be afraid of our trials, neither are we to seek after them. We are to take up our cross when it is in our way, but we are not to go out of our road in search of difficulties and dangers. We see, therefore, a very great difference in the first and second era of Christianity. What God commands he will enable us to do, and he will accept our obedience. But with regard to other things we hear him say, “Who hath required this at your hands?” Our Lord told his disciples that when they were persecuted in one city they were to flee into another; and for a while they did this; but soon after we find persons longing for persecution, and anxious to become martyrs, and that their zeal required to be tempered with prudence, and soon, instead of comparative solitude and seclusion from the world, came in the doctrine of forbidding to marry, and of abstaining from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. But, while Peter here shows his imprudence, he also shows his wisdom in asking the permission of our Lord. He would not come down till he was bidden. “And Jesus said, Come.” Why did he indulge Peter? It was to try him: and here was great faith evinced by the apostle; for when Peter heard this he immediately left the ship and went to Jesus.

July 9.—*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Matt. xiv. 30, 31.

THE APOSTLE Paul speaks of the great things which faith has done;—that it can enable us to enter a lion's den, or to face a fiery furnace. Here we find it could lead a man to slip down the side of a ship and stand upon the bare water and walk there. But how long does this continue? Why, "when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid." What a sudden change! And such changes are common in the experience of believers. What transitions are there in a day, or sometimes in an hour, from light to darkness, from liberty to bondage, from hope to fear, and from joy to sadness! We seldom continue long in one state. But what was it that produced this change? Oh, it was looking at the storm, and not looking to Jesus: had he looked at him, he would not have thus trembled. Moses endured, how? "By seeing him who is invisible." "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness." And how did he act? He did not consider the difficulties that stood in the way of the accomplishment of the divine promise, but rested on the assurance itself. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giviug glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform." Observe, while Peter thus trembled he cried out, "Lord, save me." This is a proper prayer to be used by us in every emergency, and even in those afflictions which we bring upon ourselves. To whom in any of our distresses can we repair for succour, but to him who is "the consolation of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble"? Oh, let us beware of other expedients. Beware of infidelity, beware of worldly dissipation, but have recourse to him who is the great burden-Bearer, and who is always nigh, and always saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is well to observe to what our thoughts and desires first turn when we come into difficulties and distresses. Afflictions are designed to bring us to him in a way of prayer. But it is said of Asa, "He sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord." Observe,

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no sooner does Peter ask for help than he obtains it:—"and immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And did he ever refuse any that sought him? Is he not more ready to hear than we are to pray? Is there a Christian to be found who has not had the promise verified,—“Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear”? But, while he gives Peter his hand and helps him, he administers unto him reproof:—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Did I not tell you to come? Was not I by your side? This doubting of Peter's does not refer to his eternal salvation, but to his sinking into the water; yet it will apply to the concerns of the soul and eternity. "When we doubt, let us reflect on the truth of God, as well as upon his kindness, and remember that we rob ourselves of great consolation in religion, and stability in the divine life, by giving way to doubts; for the Scripture says, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

July 10.—*And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*
Matt. xiv. 32, 33.

THOUGH Christ reproved Peter, yet he heard his prayer and helped him; and so he did the father of the child who cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." He was compelled to say, "O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" but he said, "Bring him unto me," and he healed him. We see that he came into the ship now, and would not continue longer walking on the sea, but makes use of the ship. Our Lord thus teaches us, that, when ordinary resources are sufficient, we are not to be looking after extraordinary means and expedients. And he did not enter the ship alone: "they came;" that is, Peter came with him. He might have left Peter on the sea, and said to him, "This is what you wished; here you desired to come, and here you shall remain." But he would not deal with him according to his desert, but allowed him to enter with him. We may be sure Peter was delighted with the permission to re-enter. "And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased;" not be-

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fore the storm had done its appointed work. It had tried the disciples; it had tried Peter; and now it was to proclaim the Saviour's power and authority, seeing that at his approach the wind ceased. We may apply this to another instance: when the Saviour enters the soul, however stormy its condition before, immediately there is a calm. "By believing we enter into rest." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Then, "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement." Observe the effects of this interposition. First, *Behold the confirmation of their faith.* They now said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." They knew this before, but now felt it with more confidence. The thing was as true before, but their belief of it was now increased and established. Secondly, *We see how it drew forth their admiration.* "They came and worshipped him," not only for what he was in himself, but for what he had now done. According to the promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

July 11.—*A lively hope.* 1 Peter i. 3.

LET us regard the Christian's hope in reference to its influence. Hope is not a dormant principle, but a most stirring and active one. It is the mainspring of life. The plougher ploughs in hope, the sower sows in hope, the student studies in hope; nor can we imagine that the Christian's hope will put forth no energies, or that it will produce no effects. It is called not only a living, but a "*lively* hope." We may remark here three things. First, This hope has a *saving influence*. "We are saved by hope." This is literally true. Man fell by losing his confidence in God, and is only to be restored by the recovery of it. We never can effect any thing in the salvation of a sinner till we inspire him with "everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace." The whole design of the Scriptures is to produce this; according to the apostle,—"*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*" And, says Peter, "God raised him up and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." Observe, this hope is a *working*, active principle. Despair freezes us and

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benumbs our exertion, blocks up the way to heaven, locks the gate of paradise, and flings the key into the bottomless pit. Secondly, It has a *sanctifying* influence. Hence says the Apostle John, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The Holy Spirit always impresses the mind with the all-pervading presence of Jehovah, and moulds it after what it pursues and desires. This hope will induce the possessor to renounce what is incompatible with the divine will, and to persevere in the use of means until it succeeds and gains its end. "Therefore," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Thirdly, It has a *preserving* influence. Hence it is called a helmet, "and for a helmet the hope of salvation." As the helmet guards the head in the day of battle, so this hope guards the Christian. It guards him from worldly allurements, and vanities, and dissipations. Having tasted of the spring of living waters, the muddy puddle tempts them in vain; and having tasted of the grapes of Eschol, they no longer long after the leeks and the garlic of Egypt. Cattle are much more liable to break the bounds when kept on a narrow and barren common, than when feeding in green pastures and beside the living waters. The Christian can make his own comment upon this: he often says,—

"Why should my foolish passions rove?
Where can such sweetness be
As I hare tasted in thy love,
As I have found in thee?"

So also it preserves a Christian from error. It establishes his heart with grace; it confirms his confidence, so that he is "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Fourthly, It has a *quicken*ing influence. "Quicken thou me," says David, "according to thy word." "Thy word hath quickened me." As this hope prevails in them, their strength is increased. "They mount up with wings as eagles, they run and are not weary, they walk and are not faint." This hope, therefore, is to them as wind to the sails and as oil to the wheels. The advantages of this hope with regard to Christians are very great. They never walk so well in "the fear of the Lord" as when they walk in "the comforts of

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the Holy Ghost.” Again, it has a *supporting* influence: so says the apostle:—“which hope we have both sure and steadfast.” What the anchor is to the vessel, such is hope to the Christian amidst the trials and calamities of life. This hope in exercise enables the believer in Jesus not only to possess his soul in peace, but also to rejoice in tribulation. So says the church:—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and, there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

July 12.—*Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.* Ps. xxxv. 3.

Now, this supposes that a believer is not always in possession of the evidence he longs after. His interest in salvation is one thing, and his knowledge of it is another. A child may be heir to an estate, and not be conscious of it; but his ignorance of it in his infancy does not affect his title. Some say that the full assurance of faith is essential to a state of salvation. Indeed! The words “full assurance of faith” are used only once in Scripture, and are wrongly quoted. It occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, meaning thereby a firm belief that God will view us through the blood of the atonement, and will receive us graciously for the sake of Christ. The apostle does not there intend a participation of our actual interest in the great salvation. Persons often use this expression who are full of self-confidence; but if we judge of them by their tempers and conduct, we shall not be likely to think they are justified in using it according to their interpretation. The apostle makes use of the expression, “full assurance of hope,” and this we may employ. “For we are saved by hope,” and we “rejoice in hope.” It is by this hope that the experience of believers is here characterized; only this “full assurance” may be viewed in *two* ways:—the “full assurance” of victory as having risen above doubts and fears, and while conflicting with them. This latter will serve to describe the experience of a very large portion of the Lord’s people. They frequently hesitate while attempting to draw conclusions in their own favour. They therefore, with David, exclaim, “Show me a token for good;” and we find, upon examination, this anxiety arises from three things. First, From *their great attachment to*

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the object; for there is nothing they so much love and desire. Every thing else in comparison is less than nothing, and vanity. Now, no wonder such an attachment as this should make them alive to their danger of losing it. Secondly, This anxiety arises from *the danger of delusion*; for this is possible. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death." We are exposed to an enemy of whose devices we ought not to be ignorant, with whose numberless wiles we should be better acquainted. We know that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And a Christian, having been so frequently imposed upon by his own heart, is very suspicious of any thing encouraging coming from that old treacherous quarter, while he remembers the language of Solomon:—"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." A mistake here is not only possible, but *common*. Solomon tells us there is a whole generation of those self-deceivers:—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness;" and our Saviour tells us of a whole church who said, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." We read of some who are far from being godly, yet have "no bands in their death, and their strength is firm;" and of others who carry their confidence to the very last,—yea, up to the *throne* of God itself, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us, and *he* shall answer and say, I know you not whence ye are. Then they shall begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but *he* shall say, I know ye not whence ye are. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Then, Thirdly, It arises from the *dreadfulness of delusion*. There is something very gloomy in disappointment, especially where the object of hope is very great and lovely and the expectation very warm and strong. Oh, the wretchedness of disappointment here! How blessed, then, is this assurance! Oh to be able to say, with the sweet Psalmist in our Israel,—

"When I can say this God is mine,
 When I can feel his glories shine,
 I tread the world beneath my feet,
 And all that earth calls good or great."

July 13.—*Behold, he taketh away; ... who will say unto him, What doest thou?* Job ix. 12.

FROM the recorded experience of the patriarch we may observe two things. First, That *the people of God may suffer*. They may “eat the bread of adversity, and drink the water of affliction;” their purposes may be broken off,—even the thoughts of their hearts,—their schemes frustrated; they may suffer calamity in their worldly circumstances, may be deprived of their beloved connections; they may suffer from the loss of health and friends; their trials may be painful and repeated, and deep may call unto deep, and they may exclaim, “All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me.” Secondly, We remark that *the afflictions of the righteous come from God himself*. We are not, in our conclusions concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, to stop at second causes, or ascribe them to the instrumentality of creatures, saying, It was that unlucky accident, that treacherous friend, that malicious adversary, that brought all this upon us. Let us rather say, with Eli, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” The Chaldeans stripped Job of his substance, and the elements destroyed his family; but Job said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.” This was not only a just but a very profitable conclusion. Behold, he taketh away; and shall we murmur or censure? No, says Job: “who will say unto him, What doest thou?” So said David:—“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.” And it is this that God himself has enjoined:—“Be still, and know that I am God.” This turns submission into acquiescence; this enables the Christian to say, with his Lord and Master, “The cup which my heavenly Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?”

July 14.—*He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.* Ps. xl. 3.

LET us consider the advantages derivable from the satisfaction here enjoyed. Here, first then, our fellow-creatures are to be considered:—“many shall see it.” They will derive benefit from it, and we ought to be concerned for their welfare; we

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are to do them good by teaching and admonishing, inviting and attracting them to the Saviour. But how much better may we expect to succeed when we can speak from our own experience; when we can go to them and say, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" when we can go to them and say, "Lo, this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." There is another party to be considered, and that is God himself. "Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." For his honour we ought to be concerned, and that "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God." A master is never more recommended than when his servants are heard singing at their work: it shows he does not burden them; it shows that they find his service freedom and pleasure. How can God be more glorified by us than by our always being happy in his service? Oh, how it recommends the religion of the Bible when Christians let others see that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness! On the other hand, when persons are always full of complaints, how do they confirm the prejudices of the world, that religion has nothing to do with pleasures!

July 15.—*Show me a token for good.* Ps. lxxxvi. 17.

LET us glance at those tokens by which God can satisfy the inquiring mind. We will arrange these under four classes. The first we shall call *supernatural*. Many of these are in Scripture. "When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and said he would give him the land of Canaan to inherit, Abraham said, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" So God gave him to see "a burning furnace, and flames ascending to heaven." This was a real miracle. An angel appeared of old to a thresher when he was in his barn, and said unto him, "The Lord is with thee." Gideon said unto him, "If the Lord be with us, why then hath all this evil befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." And he could not be prevailed on to take the command of the army which was to put to flight the Midianites, unless God should show him a sign,

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and make the fleece of wool wet with dew while all the earth was dry; And then he wished to prove God by the fleece being dry while all the earth was wet. And God complied with his weakness: so good is he! But the age of miracles is gone by, and we are not to look for supernatural appearances. The second class we call *superstitious* or *enthusiastical*. The one arises from the warmth of imagination or from the buoyancy of hope, and the other from the apprehension of fear. But it is not necessary to distinguish between them in the article before us when referring to these delusive tokens. For instance: if some people open the book of God and hit upon any thing delightful, they are immediately encouraged. But if they meet with any thing dreadful they are as soon depressed, as if some awful thing were about to befall them from God. Now, this is very wrong; for, though God may have appeared to his people in this way, it is not his ordinary way. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." "If they speak not according to the law and the testimony, it is because there is no light in them." There are some who throw open their Bibles accidentally and decide upon the first passage that meets their eye; whereas we should let the "word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom," and we are to use it wisely and apply it. Any passage that thus occurs to our reflection we may improve in various ways, but not depend upon it in deciding the state of our souls or our path of duty. How well was Satan acquainted with Scripture, especially with the book of Psalms! for he was accurate in his quotations when tempting the Saviour, but only to oppose it. Again, the Saviour says, "It is written," and we must take one part of Scripture with another, or else we may be led into all kinds of delusion. The word of our God contains all the information we need while here. Some make much of events that occur; but how can they determine the will of God? Suppose our way be prosperous: does not prosperity attend wicked men? And how frequently have good men been tried! When they have sailed at the command of Christ, and with him on board too, the wind has been contrary. As we go along through life, many an opening will appear, not for us to enter, but to shun. This may be intended for our trial. When Jonah wished to flee from the presence of the Lord, he found a ship ready to sail in. How providential! Yes, it was providential. But this providence was to try his obedience, not to encourage

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his disobedience. And we know this ship, so ready at hand, carried him into the belly of hell, and when he got out he said, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies." Let us now consider the third class of tokens; namely, those which are *favourable* but *insufficient*. It is well to have a good report from others, for enemies to say nothing against us, as in the case of Daniel, "except it be touching the law of our God." It is well to have a good report from all the brethren. But what know they of our inward frame, of our motives and our hearts? "If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Judas stood well with his fellow-disciples, not one of whom entertained the least doubt with regard to him; and yet he was the betrayer of our Lord. It is well to see a man reformed from profligacy, to see the drunkard give up his cups, the swearer fearing an oath, and the profaner of God's day keeping it holy. But, though this is favourable, it is not absolutely satisfactory. There may be reformation without an inward change. There may be morality without piety. A man may have another heart, and not a new one. He may go far in religion, so that it may be said of him, "He is not far from the kingdom of God," and yet perish after all. How dreadful will it be for him to sink just at the entrance of that kingdom! The last class of evidences are those that are *genuine* and *decisive*. Of such, we make no scruple at once to say, is a brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit. "The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "To that man will I look," saith the Lord, "who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." A natural man may learn to imitate the language of the penitent, but he cannot experience his feelings. If our hearts be broken for sin, and we are brought from its power and practice, then have we the evidence of being the children of God.

July 16.—*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

NEXT to brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, *gratitude for spiritual mercies* more than for temporal ones may be viewed as one of the principal evidences of our being "in the faith." The natural man may thank God for a safe journey, a successful

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stroke in business, and seasonable weather; but he does not bless God for divine mercies,—he does not thank God for his unspeakable gift. The Christian's gratitude rises much higher when contemplating spiritual mercies, and therefore says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." *Love to private devotion* forms another evidence of our being Christians. There may be attractions to lead persons to the house of God; there may be something in the manner of a preacher; or they may go to hear the singing, or to ease their consciences, or to please their religious connections; and yet their heart may be a stranger to divine things. If we are in a large company, and there is but one disagreeable person there, the enjoyment of the others' society would enable us to bear with him. But suppose we were to be left alone with him: how should we feel then? And suppose we were left *alone with God*: how do we feel then? Let us try ourselves by this standard. Another evidence is *love to the brethren*:—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "He that loveth him that begat loveth also them that are begotten of him;" for he is a partaker of the same divine nature. He may not be of the same religious denomination with ourselves; yet we love him, as we do all who bear the image of the Saviour, of whatever name they may be. We stretch forth our hand with our divine Lord, and say, "He who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother." Again, *a readiness to know the will of God concerning us* is another evidence of our Christianity, and so is also our being angry with ourselves, rather than with the preacher who may reprove us for any fault, not "counting him as an enemy because he tells us the truth." *Adhering to God in duty*, though we may have little or no comfort, is another evidence in our favour, because it shows the existence of religious principle. We can then say,—

"Should worlds conspire to drive me hence,
Moveless and firm this heart should lie;
Resolved, (for that's my last defence.)
If I must perish, there to die."

Another evidence is *a perception of the excellency and glory of*

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divine things. This no unconverted man ever possessed; but a Christian not only perceives their reality, but discovers their beauty, so as to long for them, saying of the Saviour, "He is altogether lovely, and the fairest among ten thousand." *Acquiescence with the divine will is another evidence* in our favour. If we love the service of God, acquiesce in his will, and glory in it and in nothing else, we have the evidence of having the peace of God ruling in our hearts. It is our possession of the Spirit of Christ that is to determine our condition; for the Apostle John says, "We know we are his, because of the spirit which he hath given us." And we read that the Spirit "seals us." "He bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." What then do we know of him? Those persons are much mistaken who judge that they have the Holy Spirit because of some certain impulses they are the subjects of. It is the Spirit alone that convinces of sin, and he is called "the Spirit of grace and supplication." While the Christian may take courage that he will never be destroyed, yet his evidences may be removed, and in an hour of temptation he may lose what he would give worlds to regain, but never may in this life, and may at last, like an offending child, be put to bed in the dark crying. If, therefore, we would walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, we must be in the fear of the Lord all the day.

July 17.—*What is our hope?* 1 Thess. ii. 19.

ALL men have hope, or they could not enjoy pleasure by day, or repose by night. If hearers of the gospel were individually asked, Do you hope to be saved? "Surely I do," they would answer. And if we were to inquire of such, On what does your hope depend? we should find many depending alone on the mercy of God. Well, he is merciful; but then he is also just. "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Another would say, "Oh, I hope to repent at some future period." And are these sure, then, that that period will ever arrive? Does sickness always forewarn the approach of death? Can any be sure their disorder will not be such as will preclude the exercise of reason? Will they not find, when they come to that period, that repentance is impossible without the influence of the Spirit, of God? And can they suppose that after resisting his Spirit in

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thousands of instances, God will, in some extraordinary manner, interpose to save them, and by a kind of miraculous agency work in them to will and to do? We know sinners can do nothing to merit his grace, but they may do much to deserve his wrath, and “he that, being often reprovèd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” Well, there is a hope that is not good. There is the hope of the hypocrite. Men may deceive their fellow-creatures, but God is not mocked, for “what is the hope of the hypocrite when God taketh away his soul?” Job compares the hope of such to a spider’s web, which is curiously wrought but easily broken, or swept away by the besom of destruction. There is the hope of the Pharisees,—a hope derived from their worthiness or works, from their not being so bad as others, having always paid their fellow-creatures their demands and been regular in all their forms of devotion. We do not depreciate these things: they are good in themselves, but bad as substitutes for Christ. They are good as parts of our duty, but bad enough as the foundation of our hope for salvation. God has previously made known to us the way of salvation, and commanded us to believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. If, after all this, they should seek salvation in any other way, they rob him of his glory, frustrate his grace, and make Jesus Christ to have died in vain. There is the hope of the Antinomian. This is a rebellion against common sense, and blasphemy against every chapter and verse and letter in the Bible:—“For without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” There is the hope of the worldling. Here all is vanity and vexation of spirit. What has it done for its possessors? Has it made them happy? Has it made them free indeed? Were we to allow that the worldling’s hope was in every respect very good, need these be told that they are always going away from it? while, as to the Christian, he is always advancing towards his hope:—

“Yet a season, and, we know,
 Happy entrance will be given;
 All our sorrows left below,
 And earth exchanged for heaven.”

But are any asking, “May I aspire after this good hope?” Unhesitatingly we reply, and that too without presumption. It would be presumption indeed if it were not a good hope through

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grace. Worthiness has no claim here, and unworthiness is no bar before God:—

“All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel our need of him.”

Those to whom the Lord has given this grace cannot be too thankful that he has so highly distinguished them. They cannot be too zealous in endeavouring to bring others into the same state with themselves. They know the wretchedness of a state in which they once were, “without hope, and without God in the world;” and they know the blessedness of the state in which they now are, having a good hope, and God with them in the world. They are the very persons, therefore, to go to others and to address them from their own experience. They can say, with Eliphaz, “Lo, this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.”

July 18.—*The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom ruleth over all.* Ps. ciii. 19.

HERE we have the doctrine of the all-disposing agency of God again asserted. But let us consider how it is to be improved? We observe that there are two uses to which it may be applied. First, In a way of *conviction*. It is desirable to have it settled firmly in our minds that we are not in a world ungoverned by Jehovah. There is a notion prevailing among some men, half philosophical, and more than half infidel, that God is attentive to the world as a grand and complete system, but that he disregards mankind individually. If this arises from a concern to relieve the Almighty from a good deal of perplexity and care, it is all needless, for “He fainteth not, neither is he weary: there is no searching of his understanding;” and “Nothing is too hard for the Lord.” Then reason tells us that a universal providence necessarily implies a particular one, as the whole is made up of parts. Among men an attention to little things prevents an attention to great things; and an attention to great things prevents an attention to little things. But this is not the case with God: while he wings an angel, he hears the chirping of a grasshopper. He teaches the spider to weave his web: and what says the Great Teacher on this subject?—“A sparrow falleth not

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to the ground without your Father;" and "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." If there were no controlling agency of God in the concerns of the world, things would always operate immediately, if they operated at all, according to their own nature and tendency; but we see how often this is checked, so that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding; nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance hap-peneth to them all." That is, what men call chance; for there is no such god or goddess as chance in the Christian's creed. But the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever and ever." The second use is in a way of *adoration*. "There is none like unto thee," says David, "among the gods, neither are there any works like unto thy works." Then how finely he breaks forth!—"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and power, the glory and majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." We may think much of managing a single family, of providing for it, of placing the members of it in order, and of doing every thing decently and becoming. A man may think much of managing an extensive and perplexed business, where he employs perhaps a thousand hands, and has the superintendence of machinery of wondrous power. We think highly of a man who governs well the concerns of a province, or a country. But here we are told of One whose kingdom ruleth over the whole world. How many creatures are visible to us!—and how many more are invisible on earth and in the sea! He sustains them all, and feeds them all. What multitudinous, what differing and conflicting, interests are there among men! They act differently and feel differently, yet each subserves his own interest, and all subserve the interests of all. Thus we see "the heart of a king is in the hand of the Lord, and he turneth him whithersoever he will." Events are made by him to run into channels along which, as they flow, they show forth his praise. "Marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name? for thou art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee."

July 19.—*And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased.* Matt. xiv. 34, 35.

HERE we have the arrival of the company on the land. They had all this while sailed only four miles. But John, in another account of the event, says, "And immediately they were at the place whither they went." This seems to be miraculous; but the wind now ceased, and they could now use the oar to advantage, and enjoy the pleasure of his company. Time is always the same,—an hour always consists of sixty minutes; yet pain will lengthen the period, and expectation will make it longer, and "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." On the other "hand, when with agreeable company, how time passes insensibly away!—how soon an hour is gone when we enjoy the instructions and company of an esteemed friend! The Christian's voyage cannot be long; and, since Christ is with them, it will pass off speedily, and "in a little while he that will come shall come, and will not tarry," and we shall reach the haven of rest. But now let us see how they were treated when they came on shore. Our Lord met with a different reception in the same place before this. You remember though he healed their sick and recovered their neighbours from a dreadful malady, instead of thanking him for his kindness and power, because they lost their swine they came in a body and besought him to depart out of their coasts, and he took his departure from them. But here they received him with joy, surprise, and gratitude, and were anxious to improve the privilege. At first they were not aware of the treasure the vessel had brought to them. But "when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased." Two important remarks arise from hence. The first is, *the necessity of knowledge in order to our making use of Christ*, so to speak:—"As soon as they had knowledge of him," they repaired to him. Hence we should be concerned to increase our acquaintance with him. The way to grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of Christ. Hence we should be concerned for the spread of that knowledge, and continually

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praying, "Send out thy light and truth, that thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations." "It is by his knowledge," says God, "that my righteous servant shall justify many." We read in the Scriptures that we are justified by faith; but, as the apostle says, "How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" The second remark is, *when we know Christ we should be anxious to bring others to him*. "When the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased." This was wise and well; this was loving others as themselves. There are many ways of showing this, and of bringing others to him, by teaching the ignorant, by giving them books, by inviting them to hear the word, alluring them by our own tempers and lives. To do this is unquestionably our duty. We admire those who relieve the body,—who feed the hungry and clothe the naked; but true Christian charity chiefly regards the soul. We cannot cure the diseases of the mind. This is not required of us: but we can tell them of one who can do it; we can bring them to him. Let us remember the case of the lepers, who, when they had found great spoil, and had enjoyed themselves for a little while, said, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some evil will befall us; now, therefore, come, that we may go and tell the king's household." And Christians should go and do likewise; they should follow the example of the first Christians, and say, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

July 20.—*And besought him that they might only touch the hem, of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.* Matt. xiv. 36.

LET us observe the manner in which these people applied to the Saviour, and the consequences of it. First, As to the manner in which they applied to him, we observe it was *importunate*:—"They besought him." And it was *humble*:—"They besought him that they might but touch the hem of his garment." They were afraid of being too familiar with him; he so pure

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and undefined, and they so unholy and polluted,—he so glorious, and they so mean. A sense of their unworthiness, therefore, made them keep at a distance from him: they would not venture to shake hands with him; they would not touch his body at all: “they would only touch the hem of his garment.” So it was with the woman who had a bloody issue: she came behind him and touched the border of his garment. So the woman that was a sinner “came and stood behind him and washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head.” Thus on this occasion “they besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment.” But it showed the *greatness of their faith*, that they believed, not only that his touching them, but even their only touching the hem of his garment, would be instrumental to their cure. Observe, secondly, The consequences of the application:—“And as many as touched him were made perfectly whole.” First, The efficiency was *universal in its extent*. Some of these cases doubtless were inveterate, and many unsuccessful applications had been made to others; but they were all now perfectly healed. Secondly, It was *powerful in degree*:—they “were made perfectly whole.” The Saviour never does his work by halves; he never shows himself unable to finish what he begins. Thirdly, It was *speedy in its operation*. Other physicians require time, and in some cases a long time. The best means are often slow in their operation, and require to be repeated, and the patient is only gradually healed. But here all is done in a moment. Yet, Fourthly, *It was silent in its influence*. The rose does not make a noise, yet it perfumes the air. The kingdom of God comes with power, yet it comes not by observation. What a change did these people experience! “The blind received their sight, the deaf were made to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk.” The patients themselves first felt sensible of their recovery, which soon appeared to their neighbours, who rejoiced on their account; and so others will soon take knowledge of those who have been with Jesus and learned of him. The grand thing is for us to feel our need of this blessed Saviour. “They that be whole need not the physician, but them that are sick;” and if we feel and know that we must be healed or perish forever, then let us remember for our encouragement that there is balm in Gilead, that there is a physician there, that there is the same Saviour waiting to heal us who re-

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stored all these poor afflicted creatures; and he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Can we touch him, then? Yes, by faith. Faith can not only make an application to him, but make an application of him, and claim all his blessings. And we may repair to him: none are excluded, since the promise runs, "*Whosoever will*, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And coming to him we shall be made perfectly whole. Not at once, indeed, but in due time. He will perfect that which concerneth us; he will bring us to Immanuel's land, where our "sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself, and where the days of our mourning shall be ended;" "where we shall weep no more," "and where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick."

July 21.—*Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Isa. xlv. 24.

THIS is not only a prediction, but a promise also. God foresees and foretells evil, without being the author of it. But if he foretells good he must determine to produce it, or it would never be found; for "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;" and to him be all the glory. But what a blessed acknowledgment is this!—"In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." We talk of happiness. Ah, he is the happy man,—not he who strides along from victory to victory; not he who joins house to house and adds field to field; not he who ingratiates himself in the esteem and friendship of the world;—but he who is a partaker of grace and an heir of glory; he who is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and in whom the promises are accomplished. Whose language is this? "Surely shall one say;" not one exclusively, or only: though the people of God are comparatively few, they are really many, and much more numerous than our ignorance and prejudices and fears often lead us to imagine. Elias said, "I am left alone, and they seek my life;" but God said, "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose lips have not kissed him." The "one," therefore, here spoken of, is "one" specially "one," so to speak, as a sample of others. Any "one," every "one" of a certain class. Of this class are they who are taught of God, who

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are horn from above, and who are bound for glory; for here they are all agreed, under the law, and under the gospel dispensation in every country and in every age. There are some persons who seem to think that there are various ways to heaven, and that we may all choose our own; hut the way of life from the beginning has always been the same. All who have been washed from their sins have been washed in the same fountain, opened for sin and uncleanness; all who have been healed have been healed by the same "balm and by the same Physician." Though David lived under a very inferior economy, he expressed himself in the same language as the most enlightened believer would under a more glorious dispensation. Tea, he not only says, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," but, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." This includes more than possession; it includes use also: this comprehends more than acknowledgment; it includes also improvement. These are not always connected, but, alas, how often are they at variance! And how often do we fall short of our duties and of our privileges! or we should much more "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" than we do. How interesting, how delightful, are these representations of the principles, the experience, and the resolutions of the true Israel of God! Hence, as we have already stated, the man after God's own heart said, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." His resolution, we see, contains two things. First, That he will avail himself of God's strength. Secondly, That he will glory in his righteousness. Oh that we may make these resolutions our own!

July 22.—*The Lord thy God.* Zeph. iii. 17.

HERE we may observe the relation in which Jehovah stands to his people. He is our Maker, the Creator of our bodies, and the Former of our spirits within us; in him "we live, and move, and have our being." And this would seem to authorize us to hope in him, for surely he will have respect unto the work of his own hands. But as far as we are sinners, we are not the work of his hands, but the workmanship and the offspring of Satan. And therefore we must observe, that the relationship here spoken

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of comprehends much more than his relation to us as our Creator and Preserver and Benefactor. These relations do not secure us from the wrath to come. He has expressly told us this, and said, "Because they are a people of no understanding-, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." But the other relation is the source of our eternal safety and happiness; and, therefore, "happy are that people that are in such a case; yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord." Hear the testimony of God by Zechariah:—"I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Now, here we have mutual acknowledgment, founded on mutual dedication. They give themselves to him and avouch they are his people, and he gives himself to them and avouches that he is their God, for, every thing is mutual between them; they choose him and he chooses them, they love him and he loves them, and he says, "I love them that love me." But here, to prevent mistake, we must observe, that, though this love is mutual, we are not to suppose their love to him is the cause of his love to them, for "we love him because he first loved us." But then it is the consequence, and, therefore, becomes the evidence. So, therefore, he is the Lord their God; and he is so *really*. There is nothing, indeed, in which they have such a proprietary as they have in God; indeed, they have a proprietary in nothing else. Their time is not their own, their wealth is not their own, their children are not their own, their bodies are not their own, their souls are not their own; but God is their own, and they may say, with the Church, "God, even our God, shall bless us." And he is the Lord their God, *wholly and entirely*; and what the king said of Benhadad,—“I am thine, and all that I have,”—and what the father of the prodigal said to the elder brother,—“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine,”—God says to every believer, however poor and however afflicted. And he is the Lord their God *eternally*:—"This God is our God forever and ever; he will be our Guide even unto death."

July 23.—*Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.*
Matt. x. 22.

HENCE our Saviour also said to his followers, “Marvel not if the world hate you. If ye were of the world the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” And the apostle says, “If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution.” What were the sufferings of the pious Jews under their enemies! What were the sufferings of the first Christians! What were the sufferings of our forefathers! We do well to call to remembrance former times, and to compare them with those in which we live, and in which we sit under our own fig-tree and our own vine, none daring to make us afraid legally, and under the justice and mildness of the laws of the land. But what cannot be done legally may be done really. Few know what wives, children, servants, and dependants of various kinds suffer, even at this hour, in some parts of our own country, from this quarter; for, though the law ties the hand of persecution, yet the carnal mind is enmity against God, and the tongue can no man tame; the warmest ties of life are found to relax, and at last all the cords of love are broken asunder; and when persons become Christians indeed, what was before warm friendship is degenerated into mere civility; yea, it may become open malignity. There is no going forth to him without the camp, without bearing his reproach in some form or other. The people of the world never did, and never will, act kindly and justly towards real religion. They will magnify the Christian's infirmities, and will take the miscarriages of a few professors, and, like a filthy garment, throw them over the whole body of the Christian church. If they find nothing in the behaviour of Christian people that is remarkable, then they will go motive-hunting, and ascribe to them every thing that is vile, and which seems congenial with their own views and feelings, from which in this case they judge. Therefore they always consider real religion either as something really ridiculous or pitiable: it is impertinence, or it is enthusiasm, or it is hypocrisy, or it is mercenariness, or selfishness. We sometimes think that the reflection or the reproach so thrown upon the professors of religion by the people of the world arises from themselves; that, if they were more free from certain inconsistencies and unamiableness; (and

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they ought to be free from this,) the people of the world would be rather reconciled to them, and admire them. But there comes a difficulty in the way: we go back to our Saviour himself, and ask, Was not he free from every inconsistency, every infirmity, every unamiableness? and did the world then admire him and love him? Alas! It opposed him more than it has ever opposed us; and the Saviour may well say to many modern temporizing professors what he said to the Jews:—"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." They who love darkness will always hate the approach of light, and they who wish to continue asleep will be offended with any noise that would awaken them; and Christians cannot go on with their work without making some noise.

July 24.—*Followers of that which is good.* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

Now, when we are called upon to be imitators of that which is good, it is supposed that the good enjoined is represented and exhibited also; it is supposed that we have instances, that we have models and examples. And these we have, so that we can never be without the copies to write after. Let us enter further into this subject. And first, We are to be imitating *good men*: these are our examples. Many are recorded in the Scriptures of truth, and we are commanded to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Many more are related in the histories and lives of good men. And we have the actual existence of such men. We have good men in all the varieties of life. We have godly young men, we have godly old men, and we have godly men in middle life, engaged in all the cares of the world; and we have godly men in prosperity, and godly men in adversity; we have godly husbands and godly wives, we have godly masters and godly servants; and so of the rest; and, though they are not free from infirmities, (nor do they profess to be free from them,) yet "These are the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." And then, Secondly, *We have good angels*: these also are our examples. They are a race of beings very superior to us in nature, for we were "made a little lower than the angels." We know not much concerning them; but every thing we do know of them from the Scriptures places them before us as very exemplary. Now, for instance, how free

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are these celestials from envy! While the elder brother in the parable was filled with rage and madness at the reception his poor prodigal brother met with from his forgiving father, they were only filled with ecstasy; and "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." How remarkable is their condescension and their kindness! We are told that they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation. And see their union, their harmony, their correspondence: they cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts! the whole earth is full of his glory I" See how they study the redemption of Christ: we nowhere read of their being naturalists, but they are Christian students; they "desire to look into these things,—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." See how they love and adore our Saviour. He was "seen of angels;" all the angels of God worship him. John heard them saying, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" while we see also how that, though they "excel in strength," they do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word, so that he says to one, "Go, and he goeth," to another, "Come, and he cometh," and to each of them, "Do this, and he doeth it." Their employments are very varied: we read of one angel carrying a meal to Elijah under the juniper-tree, and another going to show poor Hagar, who was dying with thirst, a well; yet they are all equally pleased, whatever be their engagements, because they are equally doing the will of God, and are pleasing him; and therefore our Saviour tells us to pray that "His will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." This is not all: we have a *good God*, and he is our example. Dr. Doddridge renders the text, "If ye be imitators of him who is good," meaning (says he) God. He is the Source and the perfection of all excellency, and we are expressly required to be imitators of him. Therefore our Saviour said, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect;" and says the apostle to the Ephesians, "Be

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ye followers of God as dear children;” and says God, “Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” We are required to imitate God, not as the greatest, but as the best, of Beings,—as One whose goodness constitutes his glory. Hence, to furnish us with every advantage for imitation, the divine example was humanized, and we read that “God was manifested in the flesh.” How wonderful it is that people are not more struck with the importance of the incarnation, not only as to the article of atonement, but even as to the article of example! The divine example in humanity is (so to speak) softened down; it is brought near to us, and it is rendered even more complete,—not more complete in itself, but more complete relatively and with regard to us. For there were many things in God in which otherwise he could not have been our model and our example: had he not come in the flesh, he could not have gone before us in the performance of those duties which imply dependence and reverence. He could not have gone before us in a course of obedience and suffering.

July 25.—*In the world ye shall have tribulation.* John xvi. 33.

SURELY we need not have recourse to our Bibles to learn that this earth is a vale of tears. Where must we live if we do not daily and habitually see and hear enough to convince us of this? For let us not be unjust to religion; let us not charge religion with being the author of the sufferings which others endure as well as ourselves. Are not the men of the world exposed to failures in their schemes, to worldly losses, to family bereavement, to bodily accidents and sickness, to mental irritation and anxiety? The apostle, therefore, tells the Corinthians that in a thousand instances of this kind nothing had befallen them but what was common to man. Some may, perhaps, be disposed to think that surely God will exempt his friends who are infinitely dear to him from all those calamities that others meet with: but no; so far are they from being exempted from them, that they may suffer more from them than others. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” And there is a reason for it. God has so much to accomplish in them and by them. The husbandman does not prune the bramble-bush, but only the vine; and he prunes it that it may bring forth more fruit. The stones that are designed for the heavenly palace require more cutting and hewing and polish-

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ing than those that are designed for a common purpose. Discipline and correction,—these are for the true-born children. “If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” Now, it is not necessary that Christians should be senseless under these outward afflictions; yea, they are not only allowed, but they are required, to feel them; and, unless they feel them, their moral purpose can never be accomplished. We are not more to despise the chastening of the Lord than we are to faint when we are rebuked of him; and it is worthy of our observation that the apostle says, “Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby,”—not to those who are unfeeling and careless under it: and we may always observe that people’s trials do them no good unless they are exercised thereby,—unless their feelings, their principles, and their graces are exercised thereby. Individuals who experience this are the persons who derive from them “the peaceable fruits of righteousness.” Yea, we may go further, and say that Christians in many respects feel more under the common afflictions of life than others do, because, First, They cannot have recourse to worldly dissipation, and diversion, and stupefaction; Secondly, They feel a sense, an awful sense, of the evil of sin, as having produced all these evils; Thirdly, They are fearful lest they should be proofs of the divine anger with regard to them, and therefore they kneel and pray, “Do not condemn me;” “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me;” and, Lastly, They are all anxious under the suffering, lest the affliction should not be sanctified; for they very well know that if the curse be not turned into a blessing the blessing will prove a curse. No wonder, then, that they are more exercised by these things, in various respects, than others.

July 26.—*Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

HERE the apostle reminds us of the expediency of our afflictions. Nothing befalls us by chance, especially as to our afflictions. The Lord does “not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” There are purposes which he aims to accom-

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plish; there are reasons for these various afflictions. "If need be," says he. But, First, Who is to be *the judge of this necessity*? Why not we ourselves? No; we are poor, blind, short-sighted creatures; we cannot discern what will be good for us a month hence, nor a year hence; we cannot distinguish, in many things, between appearances and realities. How often have we been deceived, in passing through life, both by our hopes and our fears! We have desired things which would have proved our mischief if we had gained them; and we have endeavoured to shun things which after a while we found to be some of our chief mercies,—reasons, these, why we should "trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not to our own understanding." Who is to be the judge of this necessity? Why, God, whose understanding is infinite, who cannot, therefore, err; whose goodness is boundless, who cannot, therefore, injure those who commit the keeping of themselves to him. He "sees the end from the beginning." He knows now what will be good for us thirty years hence, if we live so long; yea, he knows what will be good for us in eternal ages. He knows how to distinguish between appearances and realities; and, therefore,—

"Who so wise to choose our lot,

Or regulate our ways?"

And how should we be disposed to say, "The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us"! But, again, there is another question to be asked:—*What is the need itself* of which the apostle speaks, and which is to be determined by our heavenly Father, whose judgment is always according to truth? Why, we have the same need of "being in heaviness through manifold temptations" as the gold and silver has of the furnace; the same need as the vine has of the pruning-knife; the same need as the ground has of the ploughshare, to prepare it for the reception of the seed; the same need as the patient has of the disagreeable medicine; the same need as the child has for the restraints of the rod. Or, to lay aside figure, there are various purposes which these trials are to accomplish. There is a needs-be, sometimes, in the way of *correction*. There are follies that require the rod in the Christian. And there is a needs-be for them arising from *prevention*. Paul was not proud as yet, but there was danger of it; and the "thorn in the flesh" was given him, the messenger of Satan to

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buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. Such a creature has been removed from us: we had not idolized it, but God saw we were just going to kneel, and therefore he removed it. "Our hearts," says Young, (and it is very true.)—

"Our hearts are fasten'd to the world
By various and strong ties;
But every trouble cuts a string
And urges us to rise."

And for *incitement*; that our trials and afflictions may induce us to say, "Arise and depart, because this is not your rest." The "needs-be" is sometimes for the purpose also of *producing usefulness*, of enabling us to sympathize with others in their trouble, to "weep with them that weep." And, above all, that we may be conformed to our Lord and Saviour; for a suffering head must have suffering members too.

July 27.—*Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* 1 Pet. i. 6.

LET US consider the duration of the Christian's sorrows. Brevity is the most painful circumstance that can attach to enjoyment; but it is the most alleviating with regard to suffering and distress. In the hour of pain and infirmity, time flaps over us with leaden wings, and "hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life." And come it "will, and will not tarry." No; it is only "for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations." And what is this season? What is the length of time itself to eternity? and what is the length of life to time? and what is the length commonly of suffering even to life? The sacred writers, therefore, labour to express the brevity of this in every possible way. Thus, they tell us that the church shall have tribulation "ten days;" and ten days will be soon gone. Then they tell us that the suffering period is only "for a night," "weeping may endure for a night." How soon the night passes away! "but joy cometh in the, morning." We read, also, of the "hour of temptation," and not only so, but we read of "a moment:"—"These light afflictions, which are but for a moment;" and even this will not satisfy inspiration. Isaiah tells us that for "a small

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moment" God has forsaken "his people, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them." Therefore, let us sing, or sigh,—

"Yet a season, and, we know,
Happy entrance shall be given;
All our sorrows left below,
And earth exchanged for heaven."

July 28.—*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* Luke xv. 10.

WE here see what it is that ministers to the happiness of the angels of God. These holy beings are our observers. They have intercourse with our world, and are acquainted with what is transpiring among men. They gaze upon the battle-field, with its confused noise and garments rolled in blood. They mark the revolutions of empires; the discoveries of philosophy; the improvements in arts and sciences; the extension of commerce and of civilization among the peoples of the earth; but, though they are not indifferent spectators of these things, there is nothing among all the transactions and passing events of time which occasions pleasure and delight equal to the conversion of a sinner from the error of his way. From this declaration which fell from the lips of everlasting truth, we may learn two things:—First, *The disinterested benevolence of these heavenly beings.* Though they are the elder branches of the family, and have kept their first estate, yet, instead of rejoicing at the return and reception of their offending brethren, they rejoice to see prodigals restored, and placed in a state of blessedness superior to their own. Secondly, We may also learn, from this declaration of our Saviour, *the importance of a sinner's repentance.* It is of little consequence, comparatively, whether we evoke the censure or the praise of men, the grief or joy of our fellow-creatures, whose knowledge is at best but very limited, and who are often embarrassed by trifles and governed by prejudices, so that they call evil good and good evil, and put darkness for light and light for darkness; but it is otherwise with the angels of God. They excel in knowledge as they do in strength. They are neither misled by ignorance nor warped by prejudice. They always behold the face of our Father who is in heaven. They are perfect beings, and their judgment is always according to truth. If, therefore, beings so

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holy and intelligent as these rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, there is no subject of greater moment and importance, or more interesting, than repentance. Then there can be no subject more deserving our attention or self-examination, and we need not wonder that we find so many calls to it and so many instances of it recorded in the Scriptures.

July 29.—*I will go in the strength of the Lord God.*
Ps. lxxi. 16.

THIS resolution of the Psalmist shows us that *he believed all that is said in the Scriptures of God, as to his being able to meet all his wants.* He says, therefore, in another place, “Once have I heard this, yea, twice, that power belongeth unto God.” “Speak we of strength?” says Job; “lo, he is strong.” There are mighty men to be found, and there are mightier angels; but he is the Almighty. We can work, but we must have instruments to work with; he can work without instruments. Then, again, we must have materials to work upon; but he can work without materials. He can produce what he requires; he can “call things which are not,” and they appear; he says, “Let there be light, and there was light.” We can do some things, but we know he can do every thing. We are soon exhausted and weary, and require a cessation of labour, and repose; but “he fainteth not, neither is weary.” We can use means, and can aid others; but we cannot really add vitality or strength: otherwise, the physician would not fail with his patient; otherwise, the mother would not suffer her darling to decline upon a bed of sickness, or follow him to the grave. But as to God,—

“If half the strings of life were broke,
He can our flesh restore.”

He can recall our frame, he can recolour our cheeks, he can renew our strength as the eagle’s. Who was it that enabled Abraham to offer up his son, and that enabled Daniel to enter the lions’ den? Who enabled the martyrs to sing and triumph at the stake? We must bring our faith to the greatness of his power as well as his goodness, and learn to sing, with the apostle, “Now, unto him that is able to keep us from falling;” “Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or

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think, according to the power that worketh in us,—unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” But, while his resolution shows his belief of God’s power, it also shows that *God’s strength was accessible and apprehensible*; and this is the case. “Let him take hold of my strength,” says God. God not only makes known his strength, but he tell us, so to speak, that it is at our service on all occasions, and presses us to make use of it. “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” “Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;” and, says the apostle to the Hebrews, “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.” “Let us have grace:” then it was to be had. And the same apostle says, “And be renewed in the spirit of your minds;” “Be filled with the Spirit;” “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Why, then, all this is within our reach, and within our power,—not our natural power, not our personal power, but in that of another, who is intimately and perfectly one with us.

July 30.—*The Lord God is my strength.* Hab. iii. 19.

AND the prophet found that this strength was *indispensable*, and that every moment he must live in dependence upon it. Thus the Psalmist said, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God.” It will be both instructive and profitable to enter further into this, for it is a very experimental part of a Christian’s religion. Why did not David say he would go in his own strength? Because he knew he had none. The fall deprived us not only of righteousness, but of strength. It is not easy to convince men of this. It has always been found easier to convince them of their guilt than of their weakness. There are few to be found who will not say, “God knows we are all sinners;” perhaps rather to draw in others, than to express their own sins. There are few but will say, “We have done the things we ought not to have done, and left undone those things which we ought to have done;” though they will not add, but in a public assembly, “*there is no health in us.*” They think it is in their power, and resolve that by-and-by they will attend to those things when they shall have more leisure. But it is otherwise with the believer:

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he knows that his own strength is perfect weakness; he has learned this, not only from Scripture, but from his own experience, for he has been led to make the trial, and it has issued in this conviction. The trial has brought him where we always ought to be brought in religion,—on his knees; convinced that he knew nothing and could do nothing without the grace of God, he has therefore been brought to pray, Work in me “to will and to do of thine own good pleasure.” They pray to be strengthened with all might in their inner man, and then their strength is restored. And as the Christian advances in the divine life, instead of finding his need of divine strength diminishing, he finds it daily increasing, and the increase is a blessed evidence of his faith; he need not be afraid of the increase of this conviction, that he has no strength of his own, for the apostle says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Therefore he exhorts the Ephesians, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;” and to Timothy he says, “My son, be thou strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

July 31.—*I will go in the strength of the Lord God.*
Ps. lxxi. 16.

WE may consider this as the language of Christians now. They say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” We here view the Christian as a *worker*, for so he is. And then he says, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God to the performance of my work;” and he has much work to perform, much with regard to God, much with regard to his fellow-creatures, much with regard to his fellow-members, much in the world, much in the church, much in the family, much in the closet, and much more in the conscience. Is he living on earth? It is with his “conversation in heaven.” Is he living in the flesh? It is “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.” He must “walk by faith, not by sight,” must “set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth;” he must “put off the old man and put on the new man.” And can he think of this without exclaiming,—

“Lord, can a poor and feeble worm
Perform a work so hard?”

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It is sometimes thought that the character of a Christian is raised too high for the present weak state of flesh and blood; and sometimes our requisitions look fitter for an angel than for a poor depraved man. Be it so; and we have more than the strength of an angel to perform it, for our "sufficiency is of God." We are to seek this sufficiency; we are to "pray, and not faint;" we are to "pray always, with much prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Oh, how does the Christian feel his need of this! and is not this help provided and secured for him? And the apostle says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, hut the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Again he says, "The Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And without this assurance, Christians would long ago have given up the exercise of prayer, feeling so many infirmities in the performance of it, so that they can hardly call it prayer at all; thus they say, with Hezekiah, "As a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter." This also will apply to other things in the Christian's life, for our Lord says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and says the church, "The Lord is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation."

August 1.—*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.* Isa. xliii. 2.

LET us view the Christian as a *sufferer*, for so he is; and then he says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" to bear my trials. "Ah! trials must and will befall," and we are commanded not to think of them as strange. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" and the Christian is born again to trouble. Bacon tells us that "prosperity is the promise of the Old Testament, and adversity the promise of the New." And our Lord said to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." I am not, says the Christian, required to go out in search of trouble, but I am not to decline it when I find it in my way. I am then to take up my cross, and not to say when I come into distress, with a sullen countenance, "This is my grief, and I must bear it," but this is my grief, and I *will* bear it, and, with

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my divine Lord, "The cup which my heavenly Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Not my will, hut thine, be done." "I must in patience possess my soul; I may mourn, but I must not murmur; I may say, I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Thus we may "glorify God in the fires;" thus we may display the excellency of the religion we profess, and it is thus we may be an example to all around. But how can we accomplish this? If we sink in the day of adversity, our strength is small,—and sink we must, unless we have other strength than our own. But who is this that says, "I will be with thee in trouble;" "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy day, so shall thy strength be." Sometimes a Christian may be dismayed in the prospect and in the approach of trouble coming upon him; yet notwithstanding his fears and forebodings, when the trial comes, there comes along with it grace to help in time of need! Then he wonders at his previous apprehensions; and now, when he looks back to the enduring of it, he feels that he would be willing to go through the same exercises again, were he sure of the same succour and consolations. The people of the world wonder how it is that Christians bear their trials as they do. The world can see their troubles well enough, but they cannot see their inward supports; they can see how one affliction peels them, and another strips them, and another pains and oppresses them, and wonder that they do not sink under their distresses; but they cannot see the everlasting arms underneath them, and how that the eternal God is their refuge. They can see their distresses, but they witness not their nearness to God in prayer, and how they can say, with David, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow."

Aug. 2.—*Fight the good fight of faith.* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

LET us view the Christian as a *soldier*, for so he is; and then he says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God to engage in

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conflict with all my enemies." What a stranger must he be to religion who does not feel it daily to be a warfare, who does not often exclaim, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." And these adversaries of our souls are possessed of every quality that can engender terror. When we think of them, of their number, of their skill, of their malice, of their might, of their being invisible, many of them, and spiritual, (for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places,") surely here is enough to make the stoutest heart tremble. Yes, if we go alone into the field to engage them; but not if we say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Then

"The weakest saint shall win the day,

Though death and hell obstruct the way."

"Fear not," says God, "for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." What was David when he engaged with the Philistine? A shepherd lad. What was his armour? A sling and a stone. What was his dependence? "I come to thee," said he to the monster, "in the name of the living God." What was the result? He was "more than a conqueror!" And David's God is ours, and we have the same assurance of security. But some are saying, "I am much below David; I am nothing better than a worm: and how am I to engage with all these enemies?" Let all such hear God, saying, "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand. Fear thou not. worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing-instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them, and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel."

Aug. 3.—*We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you.* Num. x. 29.

Let us view the Christian as a *traveller*, for so he is; and then he says, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," to pursue my journey, and to hold on my way to the end. Dr. Watts has finely seized upon this in his version of our text:—

"My feet shall travel all the way,
Of the celestial road;
And march with courage in thy strength,
To meet my Saviour-God."

The journey of Jacob was a trying one; the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness was a trying journey, and "the souls of the people were much discouraged because of the way." It is the same with Christians now, but it ought not to be so, it is very true, as we sometimes sing:—

"True, 'tis a strait, a thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint;
But they forget the mighty God,
That feeds the strength of every saint."

He hath said, "I will be with thee in all places whither thou goest." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

"God is our strength, and through the road
We lean upon our helper, God."

And we cannot lean too much, we cannot lean too hard, upon him. His arm can sustain us. We know not what lies before us; we know not what a day may bring forth: nor is this knowledge necessary or desirable; it can bring nothing with it; but he will bear us through. But, says the Christian, "Jordan lies between me and the promised land. I stand by it, and see its dark cold waters rolling along, and I am chilled and terrified. How shall I get over? How shall I reach my journey's end? How shall I arrive at the land flowing with milk and honey?" Why, in the same way. He will be with you then; he will make a dry-shod passage for you, as he did for Joshua. Or if not, and the waters come up to your neck, like Bunyan's Christian, your feet shall feel the bottom, and your eyes shall see the shining ones at the other side, ready to escort you to the celestial city; and so shall you be forever with the Lord."

Aug. 4.—*He himself hath suffered, being tempted.* Heb. ii. 18.

HERE we view the Lord Jesus as the Sufferer. Now, here are two things, the one requiring explanation, the other remark. He was “tempted,” and “He suffered, being tempted.” He was *tempted*. “Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” In this sense the Lord Jesus Christ was not tempted, neither indeed could he be, being the Holy One of God, and having no sin in him. But he is tempted also who is solicited by the enemy of souls to the commission of sin; therefore he is called “The tempter,” and thus the Lord Jesus was tempted. He was tempted to presumption, to self-murder, and to idolatry. But in these words this is not the exclusive or principal meaning; for in the Scriptures, God is said to tempt as well as Satan. He is said to tempt Abraham; and we read, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life.” In all which places the word temptation means affliction, or suffering; and afflictions are called temptations because they are designed to try us, to prove our principles and dispositions, and to prove the reality and degree of our graces. Secondly, “We remark that the Saviour “*suffered, being tempted;*” and from the manger to the cross we find him “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He suffered in his *outward condition*; for “Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head.” He suffered in his reputation; for every evil was laid to his charge, and, in the language of prophecy, he could say, “Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. And I looked for some to take pity, but there were none, and for comforters, but I found none.” He suffered in his *connections*. His countrymen would not receive him, “neither did his brethren believe on him.” One of his disciples denied him, another betrayed him, and in the hour of trial “they all forsook him and fled!” He suffered in his *body*. “The ploughers ploughed, they made long their furrows” by the scourge. “His face was marred more than any man’s, and his form more than the sons of men.” His hands and his feet were nailed to the cross. He suffered in his *soul*. “The Lord was pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief. He made his soul an offering for sin.” How well could he say, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like

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unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger"! Here we may remark, in illustration, that the divine nature did not render the human incapable of pain; and, also, that his patience was not hardened into philosophical apathy or stoical indifference. There is no merit in bearing what we do not feel: this would be like patience in a stone when we strike it. There is no grace in giving up what we do not value,—no virtue in fasting when we have no appetite for food. But "Jesus groaned in spirit and was troubled." "Jesus wept." He "was sore amazed and very heavy." He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and, in his agony for us, "He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." With strong cryings and tears he made supplication, and said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Instead, therefore, of his being less sensible of suffering than others, he was more so. He was perfectly fitted to feel all that immensity of suffering he had voluntarily engaged to bear.

Aug. 5.—*He is able to succour them that are tempted.*
 Heb. ii. 18.

HERE we view the suffering Saviour succouring his tempted followers. Let us notice, First, The *subjects of relief*:—"Them that are tempted;" that is, as we have already noticed, by trial and by suffering. Such is the condition of his people; "Bonds and afflictions abide them." Those who enter heaven can say, "I found trouble and sorrow." Yes,

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
 Leads to that world where sorrow is unknown."

Observe, Secondly, The *source of their relief*, and how greatly they stand in need of succour and support to keep them from sinking in the day of adversity. This is that which David felt when he said, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." The Lord's people are favoured to experience "peace and joy in believing" in the midst of their trials, so that the people of the world have wondered to behold them. The reason is, these worldlings can see their temporal losses, but they cannot see their spiritual gain; they can behold their burdens, and are amazed that these do not

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press their very lives down to the ground; but they cannot see “the everlasting arms underneath them.” They can hear their cries, but know not their comforts, their access to a throne of grace, their share in “an everlasting covenant,” nor the communion which they have with their Lord and Saviour, and their earnestness of that blessed state where all sorrow and sighing will cease, where God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Indeed, Christians themselves are often not aware of this beforehand, so that they are often amazed when trials come; for they find that as their day so their strength is; and they find that God gives them “grace to help in time of need;” so that, “in the multitude of their thoughts within them, his comforts delight their souls.” They are led to rejoice that all their sufferings come from him. The apostle, therefore, says, “If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ;” and there is, when there is none in the world. So he says again, “As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth.” But how? “By Christ.” Hence says Micah, “This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian cometh into the land.” And thus said the Saviour himself, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace.” “The hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble.” He is therefore called “the consolation of Israel.” And what Lamech said to his wife on the birth of Noah, as she was fondling him in her arms,—“This same shall comfort us,”—may the Christian say with regard to the Saviour, whatever his external trials or his internal exercises may be.

Aug. 6.—*For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* Heb. ii. 18.

WE have seen the Lord as the Sufferer and the Succourer of his suffering people; and we have now to view him becoming the Succourer through his being the Sufferer. And we see in another passage how he obtained this, as we read, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience through the things which he suffered;” “And, being made perfect through suffering, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.” The ability, therefore, is relative, and may be exemplified four ways. The first regards his *atonement*. Without this, the sacri-

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fices of old would be unmeaning and absurd; but observe the relief that the Christian sufferer derives from this in his sufferings. How important it is for us to know that there is nothing-penal in them, however numerous and great they may be! The cross is the tree which, thrown into the bitter waters of Marah, renders them sweet while we pass through the wilderness. Secondly, By his *example*. "He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should tread in his steps." And by viewing him as a sufferer we may learn every thing in regard to our sufferings. Then the *glory of God and the salvation of sinners* is advanced by it. He could say, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The feeling is quite consistent with submission. He bore a cross and carried it for us, and carried a much heavier one than we are required to bear, so that we may say, with Watts,—

"Now let our pains be all forgot,
Nor longer dare repine;
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,
When, Lord, compared with thine."

Thirdly, By *sympathy*. He is thus able to enter into our case, and knows what is required in our condition. Experience is necessary to the exercise of sympathy. When we hear of the distress of another, we may feel some common pain, but we cannot sympathize unless we had felt the same; it is then that distress runs into the sensibility of another and we "weep with those that weep." He who has felt the hand of God upon him will not be able to view with indifference, nor with an insensible heart, the sufferings of his fellow-creatures. So it is in consequence of our Saviour's humiliation and sufferings he knows how experimentally to sympathize:—

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

Do we think of dying? We must think of dying, and we must die alone as to our fellow-creatures; Christians will find their fellow-members and their ministers may attend them and endeavour to comfort them, but they cannot speak from experience; they do not know what it is to die; but He then will be with them that *does* know! Are they afraid of the grave? He entered it:

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there lay “the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley,” and left a long perfume.

“The graves of all his saints he blest,
And soften’d every bed:
Where should the dying members rest,
But with their dying Head?”

Fourthly, By his *efficiency*. Pity is not power. We can sympathize when we have not the means of curing and relieving. But it is otherwise with the blessed Saviour. His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, neither is his arm shortened that he cannot save them. He has all power at his command, and all things at his disposal. “The Father loveth the Son,” and made him a present of the universe, so that providence and grace, and the whole dispensation of the Spirit in his miraculous and ordinary operations, are in his hand. Nothing, therefore, is too hard for him; whatever our dangers are, he has a sufficiency to secure us.

Aug. 7.—*I will make mention of thy righteousness.*
Ps. lxxi. 16.

HERE let us inquire what we are to understand by God’s righteousness. Now, righteousness, in the Scripture, means his essential rectitude; as where it is said, “He is holy in all his ways and righteous in all his works.” And we may mention this righteousness of his, and his only, too, in all the difficulties arising from his administrations, in all the perplexities we feel with regard to many things: how sin entered into the world; what will be the condemnation and the state of the heathen; how it is that the gospel has spread so little, and a thousand other things which may occur, and concerning which we have no satisfaction; but we “will make mention of his righteousness,” and say, “Clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” “Is there unrighteousness with God? How then shall God judge the world?” Here, and here alone, is our relief in a multitude of perplexities and difficulties:—“The Judge of all the earth shall do-right.” Sometimes the righteousness of God, especially in the Psalms, means his faithfulness. And thus Paul says “He is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.” He is not unrighteous to his promise, but he will do it. Hence David

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prays to be delivered from blood-guiltiness, and then says, "My tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." Now, God has given in his word numberless promises; and it is well that in all these we can make mention of his righteousness,—that is, of his faithfulness. Hath he not promised that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord"? Yes, and "the Lord is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." And with regard to all God's promises, he assures us we can plead them from time to time, suing God at his own court:—"Remember the word upon which thou hast caused thy servant to hope." "Do as thou hast said," and what righteousness can be mentioned in comparison with his? that is, his faithfulness. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." But the word, the righteousness of God, often and more commonly means—especially in the New Testament—the method by which God makes a sinner righteous, and the way in which he justifies the ungodly who believe in Christ. "Now, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." This is the righteousness of God, as he is the Author of it. "The righteousness of faith;" this is the apprehension of it. This is the righteousness which the apostle so much desired to be found in; and this is the righteousness which every Christian resolves to make mention of, and to make mention of only.

Aug. 8.—*I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* Ps. lxxi. 16.

Now, we may consider this as done with regard to *man*, by our avowals. We are not to be ashamed of the Saviour's words. He requires us not only to believe with the heart but to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and to hold fast, not only the reality of our faith, but the profession of it. A Christian is "always to be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him," and to proclaim before enemies the truth of God. In this Christians are lamentably deficient in our day. "The righteousness of God by faith" we consider as the method of a sinner's acceptance before God. It was this in which the reformers were so agreed. They differed

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as to church government, as to the decrees of God, and various other things; but there was no difference here. Here they took their ground and stood firm, and, rather than deny or conceal it, they were willing to go to prison and to death. Let us also act in the same way, and, when we have opportunity, mention his "righteousness and his only," especially when we meet with those who are awakened and converted. Let us mention his righteousness in a way of encouragement, and his righteousness only. Let us, in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." They feel themselves ready to perish; and, as Solomon says, wine must be given to such; and this wine must not be diluted by qualifications and conditions, but is to be administered purely as we have it in the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! We may refer them at once to the refuge set before them' in the gospel. We may tell them, if they think not themselves too good, he does not think them too bad, to be saved. And if they do not exclude themselves, they are not excluded by any declarations of Scripture from hope. We may, therefore, say,—

"Let not conscience make you linger,

Nor of fitness fondly dream:

All the fitness he requireth

Is to feel your need of him."

"Come, and welcome,"—the title which Bunyan gave to one of his books. "Come, and welcome; he is able, he is willing." In this way we should mention his righteousness. But we consider this as done with regard to *God*. And if we are asked, How is this to be done with regard to him? how are we to mention his righteousness, and his only? we answer, In all our intercourse and dealings with God in a way of salvation. And there are cases in which in our dealings with him we should make mention of his righteousness, and of his only. The first is, in *our transactions with him under convictions of sin*. Oh, what are the views and feelings of a man then! How eagerly does he inquire, "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow my knees before the Most High?" And what would he do then but for the divine testimony? What would he do if he did not hear a voice, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"? "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which

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he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." "I have nothing to plead," may the man say, "why the law, which is holy, just, and true, should not be executed upon me, but as One died for all, and as that One is more than they all, what might have been accomplished by their destruction is more than answered by his death." Well, therefore, may the Christian say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And, Secondly, The Christian may make mention of his righteousness, and his only, *in all the fresh discoveries of guilt*. These will be many. He will not only discover sin on common occasions, but in his most holy things; not only in the week, but on the Sabbath; not only on ordinary Sabbaths, but on sacramental Sabbaths: so numerous and affecting will be his views of his imperfections and his deserts too, that he will feel a broken and a contrite heart,—that he will relinquish all self-confidence, and feel self-abashed and self-abandoned; but not so as to lose his strong consolation and good hope through grace, and his union with his Lord and Saviour. "If any man sin," says John, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Therefore he feels "boldness and access by the faith of him."

Aug. 9.—*I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* Ps. lxxi. 16.

AND this will be the support and song of the believer in his dying moments. It is an awful thing to die, not only to bid farewell to hills and vales, and weeping friends, but to enter upon a new and untried state of existence, and to enter into the presence of a pure and holy God. Christians will then have a greater sense of their unworthiness and guilt than ever they had in all their lives. They may be more affected by the review of life than ever, with a consciousness of the nearness of death, and eternity at their elbow. Perhaps, too, the enemy may thrust sore at them, and, as Cyrus gathered together all the forces of Asia in his last action with Alexander, so the devil may come down upon them, because he knows that his time is short! And how are they to meet him? What are they to say

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then? They have to “make mention of his righteousness, and his only.” What said Marshal? “I cannot say that I have so lived as that I am not afraid to die, but I can say that I have so learned Christ as that I am not afraid to die.” The excellent Howe said, “I am looking for eternal life, not as a profitable servant, but as a pardoned sinner, and I go into eternity as one who has sought and found mercy.” What said the amiable Goodman, who had been so much in bondage through fear of death? “Is this that which has inspired me with so much terror? Is this dying? Oh, how precious does the righteousness of Christ now appear! He cannot love me better than he does, and I think I cannot love him more than I do.” So said another eminent divine, “I can now smile upon death, because I feel that God is smiling upon me.” After eulogizing Onesiphorus, the apostle says, “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.” Will he need mercy, then, at the last? Yes, and more than ever at the last. Where is the Christian who can think of that day without falling on his knees, saying, “O Lord, if thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord!” Mr. Cecil, not long before his death, said, “I frequently think of my last remove; and all my comfort is, when I must give up my account, my Saviour will appear, and he will answer for me.” Yes, he will answer for the Christian then:—“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” All joy to the believer, he can speak tremblingly, but he can speak with confidence; yes:—

“Since the dear hour that brought me to his foot
 And cut up all my follies by the root,
 I never trusted in an arm but thine,
 Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine.”

Aug. 10.—*Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.* Heb. ii. 17.

THERE is a conformity between Christ and believers. In all things, indeed, he has the pre-eminence; but, as they have borne the image of the earthy, they also bear the image of the

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heavenly. He is the "first-born among many brethren," but they are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. They are to follow him, "to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us." We cannot equal him, but then we can be like him in our measure and degree. To his people he is a "hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the storm; as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." We cannot equal him, but we may have bowels of compassion. He went about doing good, and surely we may do the same; and as "we have opportunity," we are commanded to "do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." And what is it Christians should admire most in each other? Why, not their fine apparel, or expensive furniture; not the largeness of their house, or the length of their purse. No! But those feelings which make them social beings, which make them kind, which make them compassionate, which make them useful to their fellow-creatures. And where are these best learned but in the school of affliction? This is a reason, therefore, why Christians should be resigned to the will of God, and that they may be able to comfort others, that they may be able to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Then we see the various experiences and conditions of Christians. Here we see them tempted, but then also they are succoured; they suffer here, but then they have One with them who is able to afford deliverance, support, and consolation. They are like the bush Moses saw; and if there be a motto more proper for them than any other, it is comprised in the language of the apostle:—"We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; cast down, but not destroyed." Let us learn to make use of this in every time of need. It is possible that we may have a privilege, and be ignorant of it, or neglect to use it sufficiently. This was the case with Hagar. She was pining for thirst while there was a well just by; but she did not know it till the angel opened her eyes. "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." What can others do for us compared to him? What said Job?—"My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God." And if they cry unto God he will put their tears into his bottle. Are they not in his book? And if friends are disposed to succour, and to do all they can, how little

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can they do! But here is an all-sufficient and suitable Saviour. Let us betake ourselves to him.

“Have you no words? ah, think again:
 Words flow apace when you complain,
 And fill your fellow-creature’s ear
 With the sad tale of all your care.
 “Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
 To heaven in supplication sent,
 Your cheerful songs would oftener be,
 ‘Hear what the Lord has done for me.’”

Aug. 11.—*And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.* Luke xix. 6.

OUR Saviour was now passing from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he was to give his life a ransom for many:—“And he entered and passed through Jericho.” This city is often mentioned in the Scriptures. It lay under the malediction of heaven. But no place can hinder the admission and the operation of divine grace. Here Joshua had saved a Rahab, and here the Saviour a Zaccheus,—the one a harlot, the other a publican. His conversion is rendered the more remarkable by his condition. There were two obstacles which stood in the way of his salvation. Let us notice these; and, First, His *office*. He was a publican. We do not consider this as an impediment to his salvation as far as it furnished employment. But it was the *nature* of his employment. Publicans were of two sorts among the Jews,—the collectors, and what we should call the farmers-general. Zaccheus, therefore, was one of the latter: he was chief among the publicans. The publicans were the appointed collectors or receivers of the imposts or taxes which the Roman governors laid upon the Jews; and they were peculiarly obnoxious to them, because they extorted the last mite from the poor oppressed people, and reminded them continually of their being vassals of a foreign power. We find publicans mentioned in three unfavourable associations in the Scriptures. Along with the heathens:—“Let him be as a heathen man, and a publican.” Along with the harlots:—“Publicans and harlots shall enter the kingdom of heaven before you.” And along with sinners:—“Your master eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners.” This was his first obstacle. The second arose from

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his *wealth*; for he was rich. Probably he was rich before he undertook that office, for the Roman governors demanded large securities from those who farmed their revenues, and he added to it by his publicanism, perhaps by his injustice. And it must be acknowledged that riches (and men are naturally depraved) manure depravity, and make it grow. They enable a man to “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” and to feed the evils which ought to be banished. They are unfriendly to a life of friendship with God and communion with him; and, though they cannot afford satisfaction to the soul, they can engross it, and turn away the attention from the things that belong to our everlasting peace; and “the prosperity of fools destroys them.” But “with God all things are possible.” Observe the *disposition* of Zaccheus. He wished to see Jesus; and who would not have wished to see such an extraordinary personage? Abraham had rejoiced to see his day. Simeon had taken him up in his arms, and, having seen him, wished to see nothing else. What was the happiness of his disciples in the days of his flesh? “We beheld,” say they, “his glory.” What is the Saviour’s promise to his people? What is his prayer for them? “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” And this is the hope and expectation of all Christians: —“It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” However this may be, what was his motive? Perhaps it was only curiosity: he had heard of his fame, of his speaking as never man spake, of his miracles, and wonders, and signs. Perhaps, too, there was something more than mere curiosity; perhaps there was a secret desire produced by the Saviour to become acquainted with him. But two things opposed his inclination when he wished to see Jesus. First, The press or crowd of people. Secondly, His stature. But he resolves he will not return home till he has obtained the sight he so longed to enjoy. Thus we see that zeal is always increased by difficulties; and exertions and sacrifices are always the tests of the sincerity and fervency of our religious desires. If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we shall use the means of grace, repair to the house of God, read the Scriptures, “abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.”

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Curiosity has sometimes been overruled for good. So it was here. Behold Zaccheus in the tree. He waits with eager anxiety, looks impatiently through the boughs. The procession appears at a distance; it draws nearer and nearer. He is now all breathless expectation. Oh, he sees him, but there is "no form or comeliness" of a worldly kind in him. Jesus, instead of passing by, makes a pause, and looks upwards; he sees him, and says, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thine house. And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully."

Aug. 12.—The living know that they shall die. Eccles. ix. 5.

THIS is one of the most commonplace reflections ever uttered; and the plainest truths are often the most important, and at the same time the most neglected. Oh, it was a fine answer which the incomparable Judge Hale returned to a person who one day asked him why he attended a ministry so constantly and invariably, which could not inform him. "Oh," said he, "I go not to be informed, but to be impressed." And what is the language of the Saviour?—"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Yes, "the living know that they shall die." Let us, then, consider the sources of this knowledge. We derive it from *the Scriptures*. We read, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" "In Adam all die." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But this is not one of those truths which depends entirely upon revelation. Revelation alone could have informed us of the origin, nature, and future consequences of death; hut we could have learned the fact without it. For what says all history, for nearly six thousand years? Where now are the heroes that once triumphed, the philosophers that once taught, the kings that once governed? The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? "Comparatively," says Solomon, "the earth abideth forever, but one generation passeth away, and another cometh;" empires rise and 'fall, and flourish and fade. Our world is little better than a large charnel-house. The very graves were once alive; we dig down through the remains of our ancestors in order to cover our contemporaries. And does not

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observation say the same? Do we not continually see man “going to his long home, and the mourners going about the streets”? Who has not been called more than once to mourn, and has frequently exclaimed, What a dying world! What dying children, what dying families, do we mourn! And who has not more than once sighed, Eternal Disposer of all things! “lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness”? Does not *experience* teach the same? Our very life is only the succession of dyings; every hour wears away a part of it; and as far as life is gone, so far are we already dead and buried. Some have had very fierce attacks of mortality; and though they were able to withstand them, yet they were thus told, in language plain enough, that their “strength is not the strength of stones, nor their bones brass.” Those of us who have escaped these, do we not feel that while we survive we yet decay? While we are persuaded that we are mortal in destination, do we not feel that we are mortal also in state? Have we not the sentence of death in ourselves? Is not some pin taken out, or some cord loosed in the tabernacle? Old age bends down the man, as he walks along, towards the ground, as if it ordered him to survey the place towards which he is travelling. And the lengthened life is proof enough of the certainty of death; for what are dulness of hearing and dimness of sight, trembling of limbs, loss of appetite, chilliness of blood, and depression of spirits,—what are all these but the forerunners, the signals, the beginnings of death? But it seems entirely needless to enlarge on a truth which no one denies. Every question besides this with regard to a fellow-creature is answered, only by peradventures. If we are asked, concerning an individual, Will he reach maturity? we say, He may. If asked, Will he become rich? we can only say, He may. Will he fill such and such an office? or will he form such a connection? He may. But if asked whether he will *die*, the reply will be, He must, without one moment’s hesitation or reserve. Oh, yes: “The living know that they shall die;” for “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment.”

Aug. 13.—*I know that thou wilt bring me to death.* Job xxx. 23.

WE not only know that we shall die, but we know much more: we know a number of things pertaining to it too. For instance,

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we know that we shall die, *whatever be our character or our condition*. We know that “in this war there is no discharge;” that “this is the way of all the earth.” Enoch, indeed, “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him;” and Elias ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire; and at the last day there will be multitudes who “will not sleep, but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” But these are all miracles; these are all exceptions to the general rule: we do not look for any thing like this. “The living,” therefore, whether they are old or young, rich or poor, whether they are in palaces or poor-houses, whether they are sinners or whether they are Christians, each of them can individually say, “I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.” And as we know that we shall die, so we know also that *death cannot be far off*. There is now and then an individual who reaches a century; but he is noticed and spoken of as a prodigy. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten:” this is the general average of human life now, and it is a very favourable one; numbers more die on one side of it than on the other. Yes, we know that but for the will of God our death may be very near. There is not a week, a day, an hour, or a moment, in which we may not die. We know the perilousness of the situation in which we live; we know the truth of Dr. Watts’s remark:—

“Dangers stand thick through all the ground.

To push us to the tomb;

And fierce diseases wait around

To hurry mortals home.”

We know the brittleness of the human frame; that the body is constituted of a multiplicity of delicate organs and vessels, the destruction of any one of which may bring on the dissolution of the whole. A philosopher once said, with regard to those who sailed, that they were always within three or four inches of death. It is but a narrow partition, wherever we are, between us and the eternal world. As we know we shall die, so we know that we shall *only die once*. “It is appointed unto men once to die;” and what can be only done once ought to be done very well; and we know also that when “the dust shall return to the dust as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it;” and that after death will be the judgment. There are persons who affect not to believe this, for we must distinguish between profession and belief

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in a thousand cases. We must remember, too, that no man can be sure—perfectly sure—that there will be no hereafter. A man may wish to be considered a brute, but he cannot prove that he is one; he may live like the brutes that perish, and wish to die like them and be no more, but he cannot. He can never be sure of this; he cannot be free from some misgiving, some fears, some doubts, in this case. And if it be supposed that now and then there is an individual who has entirely subdued his reason, and conquered his conscience, and forced God “to give him up to strong delusion to believe a lie,” yet their number among us is very few. We, however, know that we shall die, and also that death is not annihilation; that it is not the extinction of existence, but only the change from one mode of it to another; that it is only a transition from a mortal to an eternal state, and from a state of action and probation to a state of decision and retribution.

Aug. 14.—*I know that thou wilt bring me to death.* Job xxx. 23.

LET us contemplate the happiness or the misery of this knowledge. What a source of misery must this knowledge be to a man who is a sinner! If it be not, it ought to be. But it commonly is, and much more commonly than those who feel it are willing to allow. In several of Voltaire’s letters to his private friends, this expression frequently occurs:—“I hate life, and I dread death.” Why, the only concern of thousands of our fellow-creatures is to banish the thought of it from their minds; for the remembrance of it, like the handwriting on the wall, is enough to turn the pleasures of the feast into horror and anguish. Inspiration itself calls death “the king of terrors.” What view can be taken of it that can be agreeable and inviting, that must not be repulsive and terrible, to an unpardoned, unrenewed sinner? If he desires it, the Scripture meets him with the question, “For what do you desire the day of the Lord? The day of the Lord to you is darkness, and not light.” Those who say it is better for them to die than to live are perfectly mistaken; for, whatever be their present hardships, and privations, and sorrows, and trials, these are only “the beginnings of sorrows,” these are only the harbingers of misery,—the first words in the roll which is “written within and without with lamentation and mourning and woe.” We have heard of the afflictions of Job, and that a num-

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ber of messengers arrived one after the other, and the last was always worse than the preceding; and what a sad story is the summing up of the whole! "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," said the patriarch: and we may apply this to a dying sinner. Oh, how many messengers may we suppose coming to him. One comes and says to him, You must resign all your offices and employments, however honourable or beneficial they may be, and have nothing more to do with any of the concerns below the sun. While he is yet speaking, another comes and says, You must be stripped of all your possessions,—your houses, your lands, your silver, and your gold. While he is yet speaking, another comes and says, You must resign all your recreations, all that ever charmed your imagination or delighted your senses; you must no more walk by the side of the murmuring brook; no more inhale the fragrance of the spring; no more behold the tints of autumn; no more be delighted by the singing of birds, or the converse of friends. While he is speaking, another comes and says, Your blood must be congealed and your body become a mass of loathsomeness; you must be laid in a corner of the earth, and be devoured by worms. While he is yet speaking, another comes and says, Your soul must enter the invisible world, and, in a new and untried condition, appear before the Judge of all! We can easily imagine, therefore, what a source of misery this knowledge must be to a sinner. But let us turn the medal: let us see what *a source of comfort it is to the Christian*. If it be not, it ought to be, and continually too; for with regard to those who know the Saviour, the curse is turned into a blessing, and the enemy is converted into a friend. "The righteous hath hope in his death." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace,"—peace in the issue, and commonly peace in the exit too. "To die," says the apostle to the Philippians, "is gain." Yes. "To depart and be with Christ is far better."

Aug. 15.—*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* Ps. lxxiii. 25.

CHRIST is all in all in THE ESTIMATION OF HIS PEOPLE. Abraham rejoiced to see his day: he saw it, and was glad. Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than

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the treasures of Egypt." David regarded him as "fairer than the children of men," and to be preferred before all on earth and in heaven; and the church throughout the world doth acknowledge him to be "altogether lovely," and with Paul esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. And of the noble army of martyrs, some said, "We cannot dispute for him, but we can burn for him." The hoary head, trembling with weakness.—pious females, with all their tenderness,—dear youths, with their love of life,—yet "not accounting; their lives dear unto them." There were such as these, and numbers of others, who, as they approached the stake, could say, "None but Jesus," "None but Jesus," "Christ is all, and in all." And it is the same now as formerly, only they are not called to endure the like suffering, yet they possess the same dispositions. The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart constrains believers to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again. It makes the servant willing to forego his place, and the mechanic his employ, and the tradesman his customer, and the physician his patient, rather than betray the truth or deny his Lord; willing to go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach of the cross of Christ, and "rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake." And he is still "all, and in all," in the estimation of his people. As to their *thoughts*, each of them can say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" and as to their *desires*, they "wait for him more than they that watch for the morning." Look at their *consolations*: see what is their principal source of comfort. If he hides his face, they are troubled. Nothing can supply his place. Their language of inquiry is, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"

"I cannot live contented here,
Without some glimpses of thy face;
And heaven, without thy presence there,
Would be a dark and tiresome place."

Without him friends are "miserable comforters;" ministers are "physicians of no value;" promises are "dry breasts;" ordinances are "wells without water." But when he appears, their hope, their joy begins; then, if in the world they have tribulation, in him they have peace. And we see how highly they value persons and things in connection with him. Their love to their

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fellow-Christians is founded principally because they belong to him and wear his image. They love the habitation of God's house, because it is the place where his honour dwelleth. They call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable, because it is his day. And this is also the reason why they prize the Scriptures. There, says the Christian,—

“There my Redeemer's face I see,
And read His love who died for me.”

Aug. 16.—*Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*

Mark xiv. 38.

“WHAT God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” In vain do we pray if we are careless and unwatchful, if we expose ourselves needlessly in dangerous places and company, if we leave without a sentinel our senses, appetites, and passions, and use not the means of preservation which are placed within bur reach. Prayer without watchfulness is hypocrisy; watching without prayer is presumption. Our strength is in God alone. We should always manifest a lively concern for our spiritual preservation. Our prayer should ever be, “Uphold my goings in thy ways,” and, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Whatever be our weakness, if he upholds us he will keep us from falling. Whatever be our inability and danger, if he holds us up we are safe. Now, this preservation, about which we are to be thus prayerfully solicitous, includes not only eventual security as to eternity, but stability and constancy as to time, our being steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And the very exercise of prayer will tend to secure us. And God has promised to hear and answer the prayers of his people. He will “strengthen us with might by his Spirit in our inner man.” And though Christians know God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints, they also know that their safety consists in watching and praying; they know there is no perseverance without persevering; they know the certainty of the end includes the certainty of the means. A Christian hates sin, and believes it to be, as the apostle says, “exceeding sinful.” He not only hates it, but desires to depart from it. He loves heart-purity, and, feeling sin to be his abhorrence, he will not, cannot, bear his heavenly Father should plead in

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vain, "Oh, do not the abominable thing which I hate." Therefore he sees enough in the nature of sin, and in the accusations of conscience, to induce him to cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Aug. 17.—*Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.*
Ps. lxxxviii. 9.

ONE source of David's sorrows was affliction. He had many trials and troubles which his greatness could not prevent or even alleviate. Oh, how happy was he in the village, in the retirement of Bethlehem, with his sheep, his harp, and his muse, going home in the evening to old Jesse, his father, and to the embrace of his loving mother, to whom he so often refers in his psalms. But when he had begun to rise in the world and to entertain the expectation of the throne, what did he? He soon found that it was "through much tribulation that he must enter the kingdom;" and when he had entered it he said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest; I would hasten my escape from the stormy wind and tempest." Obligated to appear cheerful in public, yet when he had given orders to his generals, and audiences to his ambassadors, and had left the company of his courtiers, we find him alone, bleeding at every pore. And he makes no scruple to lay it down as a maxim, even under a dispensation which abounded with worldly promises, that "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Nor are Christians to be insensible under these afflictions. Religion allows them to feel; religion requires them to feel. Their trials would never answer their moral ends without feeling, and feeling severely, too. There is no grace in bearing what we do not feel. There is neither patience nor resignation in a stone. If we look at our Saviour himself, shall we find that he was insensible under reproach? "Reproach," saith he, "hath broken my heart; and I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, and I found none." Did he deem pain no evil? His "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The affliction of others also drew forth his tears. And Paul says, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is afflicted, and I burn not?" We are commanded not only to "rejoice with them that rejoice," but "to

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weep with them that weep." And a woe is denounced upon those that are "at ease in Zion," and who are "not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph."

Aug. 18.—*This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 John iii. 23.

THIS commandment is little thought of, and it is often despised by the many who talk much of their obedience: but it stands as a prominent command of the gospel; it stands at the entrance of the Christian life; and, until this command be complied with, we are neither in a disposition nor in a state properly to comply with any other, for we are not united to Christ, who is the head of influence as well as of empire. The Saviour, therefore, said, when the Jews asked what they must do that they might work the works of God, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The elder brother said to the father, "I have never transgressed thy command at any time," while at that moment he was filled with the most hostile disposition towards his father's pleasure. Well, says the father, since you talk so much of your obedience, since you say you always obey your father, obey now, and go in and share with the family in the joy which arises from the recovery of my poor son and your brother: "For this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." He would not go in: he would have died,—yea, he would rather have perilled the salvation of his soul than have gone in. There is an awful amount of enmity in the heart of the proud Pharisee against God's sovereign method of salvation, and it is that which keeps him from submitting himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. But, says the apostle, it is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him. that justifieth the ungodly." If we flee for refuge to the hope set before us, it shall be a security from all condemnation; and the question, therefore, is, How we feel disposed towards this command?—a command that requires self-annihilation,—a command that requires that we look to Jesus, and to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Aug. 19.—*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*

1 Cor. vi. 17.

THERE must be likeness in order to fellowship. Every man that loves God will be constrained to be like him, will long to resemble him more and more. "He that saith he dwelleth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Not only gratitude and consistency require this, but proof. "If," says the holy Saviour, "I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." For "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Christ and Christians are not like Nebuchadnezzar's statue, the head of which was gold, while the subordinate parts were of inferior metal, down to the feet, which were partly iron and partly clay. But "He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." Pie is a partaker of their nature, and they are partakers of his. They are not of the world, even as he is not of the world. They have the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus,—a sameness of sentiment and feeling, a oneness of heart and soul. A Christian, therefore, will never despise those instructions that call upon him to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" "to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" but he will take all his temptations and his besetting sins to the foot of the cross, and then he will take them to the throne of grace, and turn them into prayer; and while he knows that in the use of means the blessing of sanctification will be imparted, and must be breathed from the Spirit of God, he will live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, remembering that this is his commandment:—"Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Aug. 20.—*I love my master: I will not go out free.* Ex. xxi. 5.

LOVE, as the principle of obedience, renders it perpetual. At the end of seven years, under the law, the bond-servant was allowed to go free; but if he refused to avail himself of the privilege, if he came to his master and said, "I love my master: I will not go out free," then the master took him to the door, and bored his ear through, with an awl, to the door-post,

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signifying by this striking symbol that he was now a fixture, that he was now a domestic, and forever attached to the family. Our Saviour alludes to this custom when he says, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, Mine ears hast thou opened." It is in the Hebrew and in the margin, "Mine ears hast thou bored;" as much as to say, "I am thine entirely: obedience is the course in which I am going to engage, and nothing shall make me swerve from it;" "Lo, I come;" "I delight to do thy will, O my God. Yea, thy law is within my heart." He was, therefore, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He could say, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you, my disciples, before I suffer." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Herein the Saviour is an example to his people; they have the same mind in them which was also in him. They are, therefore, not detained in his service against their will. They are not impressed men. They are not conscripts, but they are volunteers. They have been "made willing in the day of his power." While duty renders it our medicine, love renders it our meat, to do the will of our heavenly Father. We take the one, we relish and enjoy the other. Our Saviour, therefore, when many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him, said to the twelve, trying their dispositions, "Will ye also go away?" "Oh," said Peter, in the name of the rest, "go away! to whom shall we go but unto thee? for thou hast the words of eternal life." It is sometimes said of Christians who hold certain doctrines, "They live as they list." Nothing is more untrue and vile in the sense of their calumniators, who mean thereby that they do evil that good may come. But if they feel those doctrines which they profess, we will venture to affirm that nothing is more true in another sense, and that they do live as they list. They do observe the Sabbath; they "call it a delight, holy of the Lord, and honourable." They do repair to the sanctuary, and they love to repair to it; they are glad when it is said unto them, "Let us go up unto the house of the Lord." They do not find it their *prison*, but their *palace*, their home, their Father's house; and they can individually say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after:—that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "Surely goodness

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and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Aug. 21.—*With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*
Jer. xxxi. 3.

THE gospel has been exceedingly injured, as to its practical influence and results, by being reduced to a mere republication of the law of nature, or a mere moral code. And we would ask boldly whether a man who receives only a class of moral rules from God, accompanied with a declaration that the observance of them shall hereafter be recompensed,—can such a man have the same feelings towards the blessed God as the man who believes he is in mercy redeemed from the lowest hell by the sacrifice of God’s own Son, that he is already blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ? And to order us to deny ourselves, to sacrifice our beloved lusts and passions and wish their eternal destruction, even if reason and conscience acknowledge the rectitude of the requirement, will never attach us to a sovereign power, or cause us to love these declarations and these truths. To tell a man that every thing here is only in §, state of probation and that every thing depends on his own prudence and his own fidelity,—can we imagine that this will ever produce a childlike confidence in God, or delight in his service? Assuredly not. And nothing will, but a manifestation of goodness so great as to overpower the heart and gain it: and such a manifestation of goodness there is. We have it in the manger, in the garden, on the cross, in the grave. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” “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?” It is here, and here alone, we can be drawn with the “cords of love and with the bands of a man,” and effectually bound forever. And this, therefore, is the grand and only expedient the only wise God has devised and revealed to bring back the minds of his alienated creatures to himself. It is obvious that the first step in the return of the criminal must be confidence. “We are saved by hope.” God knows this, and he provides for it, and he therefore banishes our fears, he expels from our minds all jealousies, and all unworthy conceptions of himself, and obtains

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the trust, the entire trust, of our poor hearts. He purges our consciences by the glorious gospel from dead works, that we may serve the living God. He enlarges the heart so that we can run in the way of his commandments. We have obtained not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." Hence the Apostle Jude says to Christians, "Keep yourselves in the love of God;" that is, love the commandments of his love to you, that you may live in the exercise of your love to God. And this is the meaning of Paul to the Ephesians, when he speaks of their being "rooted and grounded in love;" he means in the discovery of his love, in the producing their love to him, as is obvious from what follows:—"That ye may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Aug. 22.—*The living know that they shall die.* Eccles. ix. 5.

BUT there are limits to this knowledge: let us consider these. "The living know that they shall die," but they know not *when*. If there are persons who have seemed to have some kind of apprehensions or intimations previously of the time of their dissolution, these were casual and not prophetic; events alone rendered them predictions. "There is an appointed time to man upon the earth; his days also are like the days of an hireling;" God has appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass; it is he who has filled our glass, and he knows how many sands there are to run out. But he communicates not this knowledge to any man; and therefore every man must say, with Isaac, "I know not the day of my death," nor the week, nor the year. "The living know that they shall die," but they know not *where*,—whether at home in the bosom of the family, or among unconcerned strangers,—in the garden, in the field, or on the road. Where have not persons died? Some have died in the house of God; some have died at the card-table; some have died in the playhouse. Ehud died in his summer parlour, and Pharaoh in the lied Sea. There seems hardly to be a place which has not, at one time or other, been a door of entrance into eternity. "The living know that they shall die," but they know not *how*,

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—whether suddenly or slowly, whether by fever or by dropsy, whether by accident or by the hands and device of wicked and unreasonable men. “One dieth,” says Job, “in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.” “The living know that they shall die,” but not *what it is to die*. Thus Joshua said to the Jews, “Ye are going a way that ye have not gone heretofore.” It will be a new path to all of us. Here is a case in which no information can be derived from experience, —none from our own experience, none from the experience of others; for no one, however charged or importuned, ever returned to let

“the fatal secret out,
And tell us what it is to die.”

Aug. 23.—*So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Ps. xc. 12.

A KNOWLEDGE of the frailty of life and the certainty of death, one would imagine, would be very powerful, very efficient, and very operative. But what is the fact? We do not find any thing that is really less impressive and less influential than death! How was it in the days of Job? Eliphaz says, “They are destroyed from morning to night; they perish forever.” And it is the same now. Sometimes the sudden dissolution, the sight of a dying bed, or the passage of a funeral, will produce a temporary impression: but it is little more than a momentary one; men soon go on again as before; one returns to his farm, and another to his merchandise; one is mad after honour, another after money, and another after the dissipations of the world. Men do not live as those who know they must die. They do know it; and yet what a slight influence it has over them! Here we see the inefficacy of mere knowledge. Some people seem to think that knowledge is to do every thing. Why, this, like any other truth, may lie in the mind uninfluential. Some imagine that all truth must necessarily be influential according to the nature and importance of the thing believed. It ought to be so, and it would be so if we were in a proper state of mind. We

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are fallen creatures, and much of the effect of the fall is apparent in the derangement of the operation of the powers of the mind, so that it is now an undeniable fact, that the clearest convictions can be counteracted, that men may see and approve better things and follow the worse. But is it not strange that such knowledge, so immediately and eternally interesting to man, should be uninfluential? Is it not a proof of the depravity of human nature that he can be insensible and indifferent here? But why is it so desirable to consider our latter end, and what influence should the knowledge we have of our mortality have over us? It should lead us to abhor and forsake sin, which has "brought death into the world, and all our woe." How should this knowledge loosen our hold of the earthly things which we must certainly, and which we may so soon, be deprived of! It was a good reflection of Esau, so far, when he said, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" And so we may say with regard to various things which would entice us and engross our supreme attention. The ancients made use of this fact when they were accustomed to place before their guests at their feasts a skeleton, in order to excite them to the more mirth while they could enjoy it, for they could not enjoy it long. But how much better use does the apostle make of it, when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives should be as those that have none." So it should lead us immediately and earnestly to say, with Paul, "That I may win Christ, and be found in him." He has destroyed death as to its sting now, and will as to its state hereafter; and the voice from heaven cries, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," and only such; that is, all who die in a state of union and communion with him, having his righteousness to justify them and to give them a title to heaven, and his Spirit to sanctify them and make them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is important for us to know that we must shortly die, in order that we may turn this knowledge to the most advantageous account. We shall, therefore, be concerned to do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do, "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither we are going." Let us then pray with Moses, "Lord, make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know

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how frail I am." "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Aug. 24.—*Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* 2 Cor. v. 4.

WE here see what Christians do desire, and what they do not desire. What we really desire, and what we must desire, if we are Christians, is here called *life*. Life is one of the common representations given of the heavenly state in the Scriptures. Skin for skin—"yea, all that a man hath—will he give for his life." Now, because men are so attached to life, and because life is the foundation of every enjoyment, therefore it comes to be used by the sacred writers for happiness itself; and hence our Saviour says, "A man's life [that is, his happiness] consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Such blessedness is reserved for the Christian, therefore: "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Dr. Watts expresses himself very boldly when he says,—

"Could I command the spacious land,
And the more houndless sea,
For one blest hour at thy right hand
I'd give them both away."

What, then, will be an eternity of such bliss,—an eternity of health, an eternity of wealth, an eternity of honour, an eternity of friendship! And life, too, is often called "eternal," and "eternal in the heavens." He will have "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Eternity will only be the commencement of his blessedness. But observe, Secondly, What they do not desire. We groan, being burdened, "not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." The apostle expresses the same thing with a little variation in the preceding verse:—"In this we groan, earnestly desiring," (what?)—earnestly desiring "to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that, being clothed, we shall not be found naked." They wish to be adorned, but not previously stripped; they wish to be clothed, but not to be found naked; they wish this corruptible to put on incorruption,

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and this mortal to put on immortality. They do not desire, death except for the results of it. They wish to resemble those who will be alive at the last day, who will not fall asleep,—that is, die,—but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. They wish to be favoured in their admission into heaven, as Enoch and Elias were, who were glorified without dying. They wish that mortality might be swallowed up of life, not as the sea swallows up the rivers that fall into it, and turns them into brine, but as the finished picture swallows up the outline, and as the day swallows up the dawn, and as manhood swallows up infancy—that is, by perfecting it. That is, in other words, they wish to enter their completeness easily, gradually, insensibly, without being taken all to pieces in such a way as death implies.

Aug. 25.—*The trumpet shall sound, and the dead, shall be raised.*

1 Cor. xv. 52.

ERE long shall be heard the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.” Oh that we now could realize that awful scene! When the dead are slumbering in their graves, and the living are regardless of eternity; while the scoffer asks, “Where is the promise of his coming?” when there is no more appearance of its approach than there was of the destruction of Sodom, or of the general deluge; when many are asleep in their beds, dreaming of happiness and peace; while some are forming plans of avarice, and others parties of pleasure; while some are marrying and given in marriage, and others have just sat down to the card-table; when one has just taken up a pen to write to a friend, the pen drops, the hand becomes immortalized, the clangor of the trump of God, louder than ten thousand trumpets, announces that God himself has come! Ah, *he is come, then!* Some rejoice at the sound, but all must hear it. Oh, if we could realize this scene now! What manner of persons should we then be, in all holy conversation and godliness looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord, “when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.” He that will then be on a throne of wrath is now on a throne of mercy. “Blessed are our eyes, for they see; and our ears, for they hear.” Some have

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heard the sound of the jubilee-trumpet, and have come: they have dedicated themselves to God; they have found,—

“There is no joy compared to this,
To serve and please the Lord.”

What are they doing? Surely they are giving thanks unto him who hath called them out of darkness into light, who hath made them meet to be partakers with the saints in light. Surely they are endeavouring to bring others into the same condition. They know what the meaning of distance from God is, seeing they were once in that state and ready to perish. They know what it is to come to God by Jesus Christ. They, therefore, are the people to whom we look. They can speak with confidence, with feeling, with effect. Surely they *will* speak. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.”

“Oh, ’tis a godlike privilege to save.”

And the Apostle James says, “If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Aug. 26.—*Fulness of joy.* Ps. xvi. 11.

IT has been asked, Are there degrees in glory? We are persuaded there are. All analogy countenances the conclusion. Diversities and inequalities pervade all the works of God. There are gradations among the angels, for we read of thrones and dominions, principalities and powers; and, though all believers are redeemed by the same blood and justified by the same righteousness, we know there are degrees in grace. The good ground brought forth in some places thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred-fold. And the apostle tells us that every man shall receive according to his own labour. But here we approve of the old illustration: however unequal in size the vessels afore prepared unto glory may be, when plunged into this ocean they shall all be equally filled. It has also been asked, Shall we know one another in heaven? Whether there be mutual recognition or not, we may be assured of this,—that nothing will be wanting to our happiness. But we may cease our anxiety respecting recognising

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the dear departed. Memory cannot be annihilated— Did not Peter, James, and John recognise Moses and Elias? and does not Paul tell the Thessalonians that they are his hope, and joy, and crown at the coming of the Lord Jesus? Another inquires, Where is heaven? What part of the vast universe hath God assigned for the abode of the blessed? This it is impossible to determine: most probably it will be our present system renovated. May we not infer this from the words of the Apostle Peter?— “Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; nevertheless we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” But is it a *place*? Our Lord has a body like our own, and this cannot be omnipresent; and wherever he is corporeally, there is heaven. As he himself hath said, “Where I am, there shall also my servants be.” Enoch and Elias have bodies, all the saints have bodies, and these cannot be everywhere. We read of the hope laid up for us in heaven; of “entering into the holy place.” “And I go,” says Jesus to his disciples, “to prepare a *place* for you.” But, though heaven is really a place, we must chiefly consider it as a *state*. Even now, happiness does not essentially depend on what is without us. What was Eden to Adam and Eve after sin had filled them with shame and sorrow and fear? And Paul in prison was infinitely happier than Caesar on the throne of the nations. Oh, says the soul, when enjoying communion with the Saviour,—

“’Tis heaven to rest in thine embrace,
And nowhere else but there.”

Aug. 27.—*When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.* 1 Thess. ii. 13.

Do we thus receive the Scriptures? What have we realized of God in them? and what do we owe to these Scriptures in a way of *duty*? Surely, in the first place, we owe nothing less than to *peruse* them. David said, “The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver;” and the celebrated Robert Boyle said, “I would prefer a single twig of the tree of life to all the riches of the world.” Secondly, We should *believe*

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them. The Scriptures will not profit unless they are mixed with faith in them that hear and read them. Are not many practical unbelievers? Could those trifle with its hallowed pages as sometimes they do, making them only a subject of curiosity, if they really believed the Scriptures? Thirdly, And what less can this duty be than to *understand them*? It is a sad thing that many professors of religion are so shamefully ignorant of the Scriptures, in consequence of which they are so liable to err,—so liable to be led away with the error of the wicked, and carried away by every wind of doctrine, so as not to know the way wherein they should walk, or the things which they should do. Let us then “search the Scriptures,” and seek after more acquaintance with “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Fourthly, We should *practise* what the Scriptures teach. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” We shall never regard the Scriptures properly till we find them a “light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path.” There is nothing in the Bible but has a practical aim and tendency. Its “doctrines are according to godliness;” its exceeding great and precious promises are given us, that “by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world through lust.” Fifthly, This duty cannot include less than our *distributing* them. The Scriptures were designed for all; they have not reached their end when they reached only us. As we have become possessors, we are also to become dispensers of them. The Scriptures are not given us as a legacy only to enjoy, but as a talent also to employ. We have them not for ourselves only, but also for others; therefore, as the apostle says, “Their debtors ye are.” And those professors are dishonest who withhold from them their rights, and embezzle what was only intrusted to them for the sake of others.

Aug. 28.—*Ye rejoice with joy* unspeakable. 1 Pet. i. 8.

SOME suppose the apostle means to intimate that there is such a *peculiarity* in this joy that it is so inexplicable that it cannot be communicated to others so as to be properly understood. And this is very true; therefore the apostle says, in another place, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” There are many excep-

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tations that are very unreasonable, and there are persons who look for evidence which it is not in our power to communicate, nor in their competency at present to receive. They witness our rejoicing, wish to know what we have that makes us so happy, and when we make as fair and full a report as we can, they are unable to understand either the nature or the sources of our joy. They must know and feel these for themselves. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," and it is only by experience that it can be known. They must taste and see that the Lord is good. But there is nothing peculiar in this: we know that we cannot communicate the pleasures of learning to the illiterate, or the pleasures of melody and harmony to a man who has no ear for music. Hence it is that the Christian talks so little of his hidden life, and the deeper, richer parts of his experience, to the people of the world; it would be only "casting pearls before swine." They say, with David, "Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." But when the apostle says that this joy is "unspeakable," he means to intimate the *greatness of it*, so that words are very inadequate properly and fully to express it. Worldly joy is easily expressed and described; much more is always said of it than it deserves, and it never, in any instance, realizes the expectations which it excites; we therefore often find that the successful votary of the world, even when he has seized his prey, sighs over it; I thought I should be happier when I had obtained such a possession, when I had reached such an elevation, and when I had acquired such a position. And when most successful, are they happy now? Is it not still their cry, "Who will show me any good?" But oh, how different is it with the Christian! This joy is always worthy the name, and above every other joy, however highly it may be recommended and prized. If we had the tongue of angels as well as men, we should only beggar the subject by speaking of it. It is "unspeakable," says the apostle. Who can describe it? Who can describe properly the efficiency of it,—how it will bear up the poor mind under every pressure, and enable its possessor to rejoice—under every deprivation? It can tranquillize the soul in the midst of tribulation, and fill it with holy confidence amidst the most alarming changes and revolutions, so as to enable it to say, with the church, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though

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the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swellings thereof."

Aug. 29.—*Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

1 Pet. i. 8.

WHAT is heaven? There is no term by which heaven is so frequently expressed in the Scriptures as the word *glory*. The radical idea of glory is *brilliancy*; the second idea is *excellency displayed*. Heaven is called glory, because it is a state of brilliancy, and because it is calculated to develop and display every kind of excellency,—natural excellency, moral excellency, spiritual excellency, divine excellency. It is, therefore, pre-eminently called glory. And here we are told that this joy is "full" of it. Christians are not yet, indeed, arrived at heaven,—that is, locally and personally; yet the apostle makes no scruple to say, "Ye are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem;" and he says to the Ephesians, "Ye are quickened together with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places." Christians are not in heaven as yet, but they know that they are sometimes by their own enjoyments reminded of the experience of Jacob:—"This is none other than the gate of heaven." Before they live there, they are rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below."

They have heaven in the taste, they have heaven in their eye, they have heaven in the first-fruits, they have heaven in their Forerunner who has gone, and as he entered heaven said, "I am come, and all my people are coming after me," and so took possession of it in our name and holds it for our sakes. Hear David: "Let the saints," says he, "be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds." How can they "be joyful in glory" while they are here on earth? Christians can explain this. And let us refer this for a moment to the dying experience of believers, for it is indeed in the dying chamber that we have most peculiarly witnessed this joy, which is so "full of glory." It would not have been safe for the Christian to have been indulged with it earlier: it would have unhinged him too much

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from all his present connections, and have rendered him too indifferent to things around, which had various claims upon him. But now he can bear to be raised above the love of life and the fear of death; now his apprehensions have no purpose further to answer, and therefore they are allowed to die away; and now through the crevices of the falling tabernacle some rays of glory beam in; now he is near enough that blessed world to hear some of the songs and shoutings there; now he can turn round his pallid countenance, and say to the friend who is by,—

“Jesus can make a dying bed
 Feel soft as downy pillows are,
 While on his breast I lean my head
 And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

And he can even sing,—

“As I hare tasted Canaan’s grapes,
 So now I long to go
 Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,
 And all the clusters grow.”

We have witnessed an elevation of sentiment and a strength of language in persons in their dying hours, far beyond their ordinary feelings and speech,—even in persons who have been entirely destitute of education, and whose low, grovelling, enslaving employments have hardly allowed them to rise up into any thing intellectual, or to exercise the power of reflection; we have witnessed in them a refinement of taste such as never was inspired by learning or philosophy; even these we have heard to say,—

“I’d part with all the joys of sense,
 To gaze upon thy throne.”

“As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.”

Aug. 30.—*I will not leave you comfortless.* John xiv. 18.

WHATEVER be the number or nature of the Christian’s trials, here is a gracious assurance that God does not leave his people to suffer without affording them comfort and support. If their tribulations abound, so also do their consolations. He who thus assures to them the comfort of his presence is the “God of all com-

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fort;" and he answers to his name, for he says, "I am he that comforteth you." Nor can he deny himself. His people have many fears. Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me; my God hath forgotten me." But no; he does not, he cannot, forget his afflicted people. No, he will not leave his people comfortless. His *relations* forbid it. He is their Shepherd; therefore they may say, "I shall not want; thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." He is their Friend, who loveth at all times. Their Father:—"And like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Their Husband:—"And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." His *perfections* forbid it. He knows all their sorrows. He knows all their walking through this great wilderness. He is able to relieve and deliver them. His *promises* forbid it:—"I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her," there in the wilderness; "and I will give her her vineyards from thence," when nothing of the kind could be there looked for, and the "valley of Achor for a door of hope." Yea, "the Lord shall comfort Zion;" and the best way to realize this, is to apply unto him for these spiritual consolations. But in what way does the Lord comfort his people in their afflictions? Does he speak of deliverance? Does he say that they shall no more eat the bread of adversity and drink of the water of affliction?—that in future they shall spend their days in ease and prosperity? There is not a word of this. But he leads them to himself, to the throne of grace, to the Scriptures of truth, to the "comforts of the Holy Ghost," and to the "joys of God's salvation." Our Saviour said to the sick of the palsy, "Be of good cheer." Why? Because thou art made whole? No; but "because thy sins are forgiven thee." It is thus the Lord affords spiritual comforts to his people under temporal troubles and afflictions, and this is the kind of relief they chiefly want and desire. Thus, Gaius had a weak body while his soul prospered and was in health. Thus Job in his deepest sorrows said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and not for another." Thus David at Ziklag, when greatly distressed, "encouraged himself in the Lord his God;" and when drawing near the grave, having much trouble in his family, he said, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,

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ordered in all things and sure: this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow." And thus Paul was comforted when the thorn was rankling in his flesh and he cried to God for deliverance; but, instead of immediate deliverance, he was assured, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and with this he was satisfied.

Aug. 31.—*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.* 1 Pet. iv. 12.

As if the apostle had said, in an enemy's country opposition is to be looked for; in a vale of tears, weeping is to be reckoned upon. "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" and Christians are born again to trouble, for "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." To how many accidents and diseases, disappointments and mortifications, are we liable! In what part are we not vulnerable! Our possessions render us capable of losses, and our enjoyments of sorrow! All through life our affections feed our afflictions. And we suffer much more, on the whole, from friends than from foes. Our roses grow on thorns, and our honey wears a sting! And we need not wonder at this with regard to Christians, when we consider how necessary these exercises are for their spiritual and eternal welfare. Does not the vine, if it bear fruit, require pruning, "that it may bring forth more fruit"? Does not the ground require ploughing to prepare it for the reception of the seed? And do not the materials for the temple require hewing before they are fixed in their places? As said a good man one day, "Sir, I see that God cannot trust me either with health or wealth, and therefore keeps me sick and poor." "The prosperity of fools destroys them." And the prosperity of good men often injures them. There is nothing, therefore, to be viewed as peculiar in our trials; there is nothing in them but what is common to men. Our brethren before us in the world were all afflicted in the same way. Perhaps we think that some believers are exempted from afflictions, and we are ready almost to envy them, for, while some afflictions are visible enough, others are more invisible. Yes, said a good woman one day, when a person was mentioning to her her advantages,—“Ah,” said she, “you see my sails, but you do not see my ballast.” Whatever advantages

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any of us have, we must have proportionable ballast. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joys." In some way or other the language of the Scripture must be fulfilled. "If ye endure chastening, God deal-eth with you as with sons; for what so is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"

Sept. 1.—*Happy art thou, O Israel.* Deut. xxxiii. 29.

THIS may be surprising to some, for they are accustomed to think that religion is unfriendly to happiness, or at least to present happiness: though they may concede that it is essential to our safety in another world, they conclude that it only brings self-denial, and privations, and restraints, and trials in this. While, therefore, they allow it to be necessary, we find they are always disposed to postpone, which is a clear proof that they suppose it does not yield *present* happiness, for happiness is the pursuit of all, and none suppose that they can be happy too soon. It is easy to see that such a notion as this must be very injurious, especially to the young, whose thirst for pleasure is so keen and powerful; but it is as easy to prove that it is entirely a groundless notion. Let us appeal to the three tribunals. Let us appeal to the bar of *reason*. All must acknowledge that God is able to make a man happy or miserable; and it is unreasonable to suppose that God will suffer us to be more happy while hating and opposing him, than in loving and serving him; that he will smile upon his enemies and frown upon his friends. But we are assured that "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright;" while "The wicked shall not stand in his sight; he hateth all workers of iniquity." Let us appeal to the bar of *Revelation*. Here we could quote half the Scriptures. We could say, with David, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." We could bring forward God himself, saying again, "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of

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spirit." Let us appeal to the bar of *Experience*. There are some who have never made the trial; but there are others who have tried, and they are able to compare the service of sin and the service of Christ together, as they have been engaged in both. We are sure that these, even in their most trying moments, of whomsoever they complain, they will speak well of his name; they will acknowledge, with David, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord." They will tell us that they were strangers to satisfaction, as long as they were unacquainted with their Saviour; but that since they have "taken his yoke upon them," and have been "learning of him," they have found "his yoke easy and his burden light," and "his service is perfect freedom," and they are "walking at liberty, because they keep his statutes." It is not, therefore, surprising that Christians should rejoice: it is rather wonderful that ever they should be found walking "mournfully before the Lord." From their own experience they are disposed almost to address others when they meet them, even in their vain and sinful pursuits, and to say, "Forsake the foolish, and live and go in the way of understanding." "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." They know this from experience. Joy belongs to them, and it belongs to them only, in this lower world. Joy is their duty, joy is their privilege, joy is commanded, joy is promised them, their joy is insured, their joy is begun. And, though we cannot go so far as Dr. Young when he says,—

"Tis impious in a good man to be sad,"

yet it is a very suspicious circumstance, and should awaken alarm in all our bosoms if we can live from week to week strangers to life and pleasure in the ways of religion.

Sept. 2.—*Be diligent.* 2 Peter iii. 14.

THIS exhortation will apply not only to our spiritual engagements, but also to the duties of relative and secular life. Hear Solomon:—"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not forever; and doth the crown endure to every generation?" And says the apostle to the Romans, "Be not slothful in business." And says he,

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better still, in his address to the Thessalonians, "When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now, them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." If a man thinks he is called to give up his profession or his business, very well; hut, while he remains in it, let him not be a mere blank. To how many is the Grand Husbandman continually saying, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Has no one hired you? Is there nothing for you to do? Seneca said he would rather be sick in bed than appear to be idle. To whom did God of old appear in a way of privilege and honour, that was not at the time actively engaged? Another being is more likely to appear to the disengaged and idle. As Watts says,—

"Satan finds some mischief still

For idle hands to do."

David was loitering on the housetop instead of being at the head of his army, when he entered into temptation. There are dangers in business unquestionably, hut there are greater dangers in solitude, unless we can leave Satan and our own hearts behind us. Cotton Mather therefore says, "I am always glad when I am fully employed, for when the enemy comes to me with his toys and temptations, then I say to him, I am not able to attend to thee now." God never intended that any man in this world should live in a state of independence, if by independence we mean inaction and unusefulness. If a man be free from the toils and cares of business, he is under the more obligation to glorify God and to serve his generation according to his will. Wherefore, let us "be diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Sept. 3.—*A glorious church*, not having spot, oe wrinkle, or any such thing. Eph. V. 27.

HERE we see wherein the glory of the church will, in the day of Christ, consist, and concerning which we may remark four things. First, We see they have *their imperfections now*. For though they possess in their hearts gracious principles, yet there

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are other principles there, which are endeavouring to counteract them continually, so that there is within them an internal war,—“the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these being contrary the one to the other,” so that Christians cannot do the things that they would. Something is wanting in the exercise of every grace and defective in the performance of every duty now. Even the apostle, who had made such progress, says, “I have not attained; I am not already perfect.” “Yea,” says James, “in many things we offend all.” And, indeed, Christians know that the sins of their holy things are such as not only to humble them, but even to sink them in despondency, were it not that they have an Advocate with the Father, “whose blood cleanseth from all sin.” Secondly, We see *how these imperfections are metaphorically expressed*. They are held forth as spots and wrinkles. We cannot notice spots in black, and we never do notice spots in coarse and repulsive visages. No; spots suppose comeliness and loveliness upon the whole. Spots are consistent with beauty, but they detract from it. We read in Scripture of those spots which “are not the spots of God’s children,” but there are spots, therefore, that may be found in them. There are deficiencies which are compatible with sincerity and the life of God in the soul. Wrinkles are one of the common symptoms of age or weakness. They remind us of the decay of life, health, vigour, and declension in some measure, and failure of comeliness. By these the apostle means declensions from our religious character. This very church to whom this text was addressed soon left her first love and ceased her first works. Our Saviour notices in another of these churches, “Thy works are ready to die.” Thirdly, We see that from all these blemishes and defects they are to be *effectually and completely freed*, when they are “presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” yea, “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” They are now complete in their justification, for they are found in the righteousness of Christ; but soon they will be as complete in their holiness as they are in their justification. Now they are delivered from the penalty of sin, but then they will be freed from all the pollution of it. Now sin is dethroned in them, but then it will be destroyed. Now sin has no more dominion over them, but then it will have no more being in them. Then we see, Lastly, *What it is that achieves and finishes their*

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glory. Why, it is this:—that they will no more have any “spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Sin, as long as it remains in the believer, is the source not only of his misery, but of his dishonour. What is the glory of God? He is “glorious in holiness.” Our glory must be like God’s glory; and we shall never be completely glorified till we are holy even as he is holy.

Sept. 4.—*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?* John xi. 40.

LET us, therefore, learn to confide in the Saviour. First, *With regard to ourselves*. Our state may be desperate as to relief from creatures, yet that is no reason why we should despair. Our case is not hopeless if he is nigh. If he comes our blind eyes shall be opened, our heart of stone shall be turned to flesh; he will make all things new. Do we feel our misery and danger? Through ail our perils he can bring us safe. Oh that we did more fully and implicitly believe in his all-sufficiency and goodness! Secondly, *With regard to others*. There are parents whose children go astray. They are ready to despond. But they should never be tempted to give up praying and counselling the objects of their affectionate solicitude. Let us do all things in the name of Jesus; let us bring him in to our aid by faith. He can of stones raise up children to Abraham. Let us think of Manasseh, of Paul, of Bunyan. “Strong is his arm, and mighty.” But, says some, my case is desperate. My wound cannot be healed. The grave has received my father, my mother, my sister. Well, if he comes not to their grave, it is not because his arm has lost its power, but because his power is under the control of wisdom. But the fact is, *he will go to that grave*. The time is coming when he will look down from that elevation, and say to angels, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, and I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” And down he comes with the voice of the archangel, and changes the vile body,—

“And every face, and every form,
Looks heavenly and divine.”

And this is what Christians are all looking for. This subject is *interesting to all*, for he will visit every tomb and call all forth. But mark the result:—“All that are in the graves shall hear his

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voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of everlasting life, some to the resurrection of damnation. The *benefit is peculiar*. The butler and the baker were both brought out of prison; but one was restored to the favour of Pharaoh, the other was hanged. That can scarcely be called a change which brings persons out of a bad condition to place them in a worse. The sons and daughters of vice, who pamper the body, who nourish it in sickness, who spend so much time in dressing it, should remember that death will deliver those idolized bodies to the worm, and those neglected souls to the curse of God. Oh, what a dreadful bondage are thousands under! If they die in the vanity of their minds, they will rise in all the seeds of anguish, deformity, and pain which they have sown on earth, all rendered immortal! Immortal pain! immortal anguish! immortal sorrows! Oh, there is something so dreadful in all this, that we turn from it to the language of the apostle, and say, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Sept. 5.—*My garden*. Sol. Song v. 1.

THE church is here compared to a garden. A garden has a very interesting aspect; and there are four gardens which may furnish us with ample materials for reflection and meditation. First, The garden of *Eden*, where man was formed, and where man fell. Second, The garden of *Gethsemane*, where the Saviour oft resorted with his disciples, where he was "sore amazed and very heavy," and "his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death," "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" where his favoured disciples "could not watch with him one hour," where an "angel from heaven appeared strengthening him," where he healed the ear of Malchus, and where he caused the soldiers, and Roman soldiers too, to "go backward and fall to the ground." Thirdly, The garden of *Galvary*, belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, where the Saviour was buried in a new tomb, wherein was never man laid, and from which he arose the third day, "the Resurrection and the Life." Fourthly, The *Church*. Now, the three former gardens were real gardens; the latter is a garden metaphorically considered only;—a

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spiritual garden, a garden for the soul and for eternity. Observe, therefore, that a garden is a place selected, enclosed and fenced to keep it from intrusion; and that this is ordinarily compared with the surrounding common ground. And so we sing, and sing truly, too,—

“Zion’s a garden wall’d around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,—
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world’s wide wilderness.”

A garden is a spot formed and arranged by labour and skill in distinction from what is natural; for there is nothing in the natural soil but weeds: all in it besides is sown or planted. And in the church we have the fruits of the Spirit, which “are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” “We are,” says the apostle, “his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” A garden requires much careful attention. Something is always required to be done, in planting, or sowing, or weeding, or pruning, or propping, or preserving, or watering. And says God of his church, under this image, “I the Lord do keep it;” so that it has divine care. “I will water it every moment.” And, lest any hurt it, “I will keep it night and day;” nor will he ever relax his vigilance over it. And herein is the safety of believers, who are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” A garden is a place of pleasure and delight. We are told that “the Lord God taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy;” that “the prayer of the upright is his delight;” that their prayers are sacrifices with which he is “well pleased;” that their service is the odour of a sweet smell. In a word, it is also a place of profit too. It yields not only flowers but fruits. The church is always “filled with all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” Some gardens yield the owner his chief income. God derives his principal revenue of honour from his church. He has, therefore, said, “I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory, the people from whom I derive my glory principally.” And indeed God is more honoured by the ordinary actions of real Christians than by all the religious services of all the unregenerate men upon the earth.

Sept. 6.—*I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.* Sol. Song vi. 11.

HE enters his garden to walk there; he enters it to enjoy his pleasant fruits there, for they are all his own. He loves to hold intercourse and communion with his saints. But here he speaks of entering it for another purpose, for the garden is his own, and it is so valuable that he will not treat it with neglect, or overlook it. No; "I went down," says he, "to see the fruits of the valley;" for the garden is low, and the church is lowly. "I went down to see the fruits of the valley." He comes into his garden especially to examine the state of his church. He looks down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there are any that seek after him. He said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,"—causing them all, as it were, to pass before him. And in the parable of the marriage-feast, we are told the king came in to see the guests, and saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment. Why, he is continually inspecting his church. And how qualified is he for this! "His eyes are as a flame of fire;" distance and darkness are nothing to him.. "The darkness and the light are both alike to him." "The darkness shineth as the light." "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." There is no disguise that can screen from his penetration. And what is his aim when he comes to examine? Not to ascertain who are learned, but who are "wise unto salvation;" not who are rich, but who "are rich towards God;" and whether "our souls prosper." Yes, he "comes down to see the fruits of the valley," to look after the reality of these fruits, to observe the degree of these fruits, whether we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," according to the time of our standing, and the advantages with which we have been favoured. And our Saviour said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Observe, it is not said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear fruit," but "that ye bear much fruit." A husbandman does not call in his neighbours to go out and see and admire his field, or his meadow, if he has only an ordinary crop: no, but it is when he has an unusual one; then he says, "Come; did you ever see any thing like

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this?" Well, so it is here; and when his people increase with all the increase of God, when they are "filled with all the fulness of God," then their profiting will appear unto all, and "herein will their Father be glorified, that they bear much fruit," and so will they abundantly appear "to be his disciples."

Sept. 7.—*Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Isa. ii. 22.

PERHAPS there is nothing to a person of a tender spirit that is more productive of distress than disappointment in friendship; and it is well when the providence of God, as well as Scripture, thus addresses us. We can turn to him, as the church did in the days of Micah, and say, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Sometimes we lose our friends from infirmity, temper, ignorance, prejudice. Others of them,—who are rotten at the very core,—these were sure to fail us in the hour of distress. They were friends for prosperity. As soon as ever David experienced the affliction which arose from the rebellion and treason of his son, when, with his head uncovered, and barefooted, he walked up the side of the Mount of Olives, where afterwards stood the garden of Gethsemane, in which his son and his Lord agonized, one ran to him and said, "Behold, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." It was on this occasion that he said, "It was not an enemy that did this; then I could have borne it: but it was thou, —a man mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." Then it was that he said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." Thus it was with Job. Job therefore says, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away, which are black by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid; what time they wax warm they vanish; when it is hot they are consumed out of their place." Thus it was with Paul: when he had appeared unto Cæsar, and when he was going to Home, in order to appear before the emperor, the brethren came down from Rome along the fine Appian Way, as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns,—fifty-two miles: when Paul saw

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this “he thanked God, and took courage.” Surely he could rely upon these in the evil hour. Alas! no; not even upon one of them; and therefore says he, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.” “To him that is afflicted, pity should be shown from his friend, but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.” We may meet with cold sympathy, if it deserve the name; but, instead of assisting us in our trouble, many may seem to take advantage of our distress.

Sept. 8. — *God commanded me to make haste.*
2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

VIEWING this as applying to Christians now, let us observe on what the command is founded. There is a distinction between moral and positive duties. Positive duties are right because they are commanded; moral duties are commanded because they are right. They are founded on the very nature of things. The apostle therefore says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” It is commanded, but it is commanded because it is right. We may, therefore, always be satisfied with the revealed will of God, because we are sure that it is founded on rectitude. And here the commandment of God with regard to the important concerns and interests we have mentioned, “to make haste,” is founded on three principles. First, He commands us “to make haste,” because of *the importance of the thing itself*. It is not a trifle; it is our life. We cannot neglect it without infinite loss, and plunging ourselves into lamentation and mourning and woe. If religion be any thing, it is every thing; and if it is important at all, it is all-important, or, as the Saviour calls it, it is the “one thing needful.” “Godliness is profitable,” says the apostle,—profitable unto solitude, profitable unto society, profitable unto prosperity, profitable unto adversity, profitable unto life, profitable unto death. “Nay,” says he: “godliness is profitable unto *all* things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Secondly, He commands us to “make haste,” because of *the limitation of our opportunities*. We have only one season in which to regard these things; then all is over. “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor repentance, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest;” there-

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fore, says Solomon, "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." But here several circumstances are to be mentioned in regard to this only season of attention. This only season is short. "What is thy life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." This only season is uncertain as well as short. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." "Man," also, says Solomon, "knoweth not his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." Then this only season has also much in it that is not applicable to any serious and important service. This is the case with the whole of infancy, and much of childhood and youth. This is the case very much with lawful business, and allowed recreation, and also necessary sleep. We may also observe that, of this only season for action, many favourable periods may fail before the close of it; and if the time continues, as Jeremiah says, "the harvest may be past and the summer ended, while we are not saved." Then of this only season much is already gone. We have only a day, and with some the sun has risen very high. "It is high time to awake out of sleep." And if this applies to all, with what force will it apply to those who have reached sixty, or seventy, or more! Thirdly, He commands us "to make haste," because of *the advantages to be derived from ardour*. It is often said (and is literally true) that "the lazy take the most pains." They make no progress, because every thing becomes a diversion or a hinderance. They have, therefore, to begin again and again. How often have we succeeded beyond all expectation when we have applied ourselves with decision and vigour! There is a pleasure in acting with vigour, which the listless, and inert, and lounging, and yawning, never know. We are never in such a happy state of mind as when we are in a tone of application. For, say the slothful, "See, there is a lion in the way: how shall I advance?" But zeal clears the way of the lion, removes these impediments, and even turns them into auxiliaries.

Sept. 9.—*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness.*

Isa. xxxii. 1.

THE Saviour is revealed in the Scriptures under various characters, and as sustaining various offices and relations. He is revealed under the character of a Shepherd; and happy is the man who can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He is revealed as a Prophet, who leads us into all truth. He is revealed as a High-Priest, who puts away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and ever lives to make intercession for us. He is revealed as the King of Zion, who makes his people willing in the day of his power; he did not refuse the title of king even when Pilate pressed him, and said, "Art thou a king, then?" He said, "Thou sayest that I am a king: for this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." This regal view of the Saviour is the least agreeable to many. Some will talk of him as the Prophet of his people, and as their High-Priest; but, while professing to glory in his cross, they dislike his sceptre; and all unrenewed men upon earth unite to say, if not with their lips, yet with their lives, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Yet, as a king, he derives a glory from every other character, and he gives a glory to every other character as a king. And the Scriptures, in prospect of his reign, calls upon the universe to exult in it. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of isles be glad." Let us glance at four things with regard to his regal character. The first regards his *personal attractions*. "He is fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into his lips." Oh, how great is his beauty! Every image must be fetched from the lovely creation of God to do him some justice. Oh to see "the king in his beauty," as Isaiah says. Those who have had one spiritual glimpse of him would forsake the whole world to gaze upon him, and have said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desires beside thee." He is "higher than the kings of the earth;" he is "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" "Of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named." He is the Lord both of the dead and of the living. "On his head," said John, "were many crowns." Yes, "principalities and

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powers are made subject unto him, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." The third regards the *blessedness of his subjects*, all of whom may exclaim, "The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." Who are safe compared with those "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"? Who are free like those who are brought into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God"? Who are rich like those who "possess all things and can boast of the unsearchable riches of Christ"? Blessed are such a people; yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. The fourth regards his *duration*. However loved or necessary any other king may be, he is mortal. But "He lives, and blessed be our Rook, and let the God of our salvation be exalted;" he "lives forever and ever, amen; and hath the keys of hell and death." And the life of this King is the life of every one of his subjects too. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Therefore Job, though he had been so stricken, and though he was such a sufferer, though he felt that the grave was ready for him, said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and not another." He lives,—yes, he lives to preserve his people, to provide for them, to guide them, to make them more than conquerors over all their enemies. It was said to Darius by the courtiers who were round his throne, "O king, live forever!" We see this among the Easterns in their adulation; when they address a man whose term of life is not more than threescore and ten years, and who may not live only half his days, we often find them crying out, "May the king live millions of years!" But here Christians may indulge the wish and be assured of the accomplishment; here every Christian may look at this King, and say,—

"Millions of years my wandering eyes
 Shall o'er thy beauties rove;
 And endless ages I'll adore
 The wonders of thy love."

"For he shall live, his name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed, and blessed be his

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glorious name forever and ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen.”

Sept. 10.—*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Rev. xxi. 4.

THE deliverance here assured has four characters. First, It is *divine*. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” He alone can do it, and he is able to do it; he is “the Father of mercies,” “the God of all grace,” “the God of all comfort.” “When he giveth quietness,” says Eliphaz, “who can make trouble? And when he hideth his face, who can behold him,—whether it be done against a nation, or a man only?” He can pardon the greatest guilt; he can subdue the most fearful corruptions; he can make all things new. Secondly, The deliverance is *future*. It is not said God *does*, but “God *shall* wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Earth will always be distinguished from heaven. Whatever tabernacles we now rear, we shall soon have to take them down again; we shall soon hear a voice saying, “Arise and depart ye; this is not your rest.” There is a difference between the *race* and the *goal*. We are now running the race that is set before us, and we are required to run with patience; the crown is suspended on high. There is a difference between the warfare and the victory. We are now in the conflict; and, though it be the good fight of faith in which we are engaged, it is a trying one, and we often are led to say, “So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” It is death that will proclaim the triumph and say the warfare is accomplished. There is a difference between the seed-time and the harvest. We are now sowing, and we are sowing in tears. Thirdly, The deliverance is *complete*. God shall wipe away ALL tears. He wipes away some now, and, indeed, many now. In the course of our history and experience, how many has he already wiped away! But at what period here can a man say, “Well, now my troubles are all over; now the storm has spent all its fury; now serenity has returned”? Alas! “the clouds return after the rain,” and “deep calleth unto deep.” But then all the sources of distress will be dried up; then there will be “no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.” Nothing shall be

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seen but joy and gladness, nothing heard but thanksgiving and the voice of melody; for "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." Fourthly, It is *certain*. We are commanded to rejoice in hope. There are thousands who are doing this, whose hope will issue in the bitterest disappointment. But this cannot be the case with the hope of the believer. His "hope maketh not ashamed," because it is founded on the word of Him that cannot lie. It is firmer in its basis than the earth or the heaven: heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Sept. 11.—*In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* Ps. xvi. 11.

WE may consider this as importing the DIGNITY OF THE BELIEVER'S JOY. There are many joys that are ignominious. Such are the pleasures so eagerly sought after by the men of the world. They are a shame to their possessors; they, therefore, require darkness; and it will soon be said to them, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." There are other pleasures that are humiliating. We enjoy them in common with the brutes that perish, and perhaps in a far less perfect degree: the mind loves not to dwell upon them; we make them not the topic of conversation. We speak more highly of some other pleasures,—the pleasures of music, the pleasures of science, the pleasures of kindred and friendship; these are more noble and praiseworthy; but even in much wisdom there is much grief, and he "that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;" and the knowledge of many of those things on which we may pride ourselves, and for which we may be admired by others, will soon be useless; for "whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." But the apostle speaks of another joy, and says, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" and there is not only an excellency in this knowledge, but there is also an excellency in this joy. It will bear examination; it will justify review. An angel may come and look into a Christian while he is rejoicing, and he will not have to blush; and the angel, if he were Gabriel himself,

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would approve and applaud. It is joy that reaches the noblest part of man; it enters the soul, it makes the soul "glad with the light of God's countenance." There is nothing impure, nothing drossy, in this joy; it is as pure as the air of Paradise, it is as "clear as crystal," as the water of the "river of life" proceeding from "the throne of God and the Lamb." It ennobles the possessor; and therefore Isaiah says, "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads." This seems a strange kind of expression. What has joy, it may be asked, to do with the head? joy belongs to the heart. Yes, as to the feeling of it: but Isaiah is speaking of it as an ornament; he is comparing it to a crown that bedecks the brow of a Christian traveller and sparkles in the eyes of beholders, so that when they meet him they say, "There is a distinguished character; there goes a great conqueror or a king; you see he is crowned!" And there is nothing by which Christians can so recommend the religion of Jesus, and adorn the doctrine of Christ their Saviour, as this. It elevates the possessor. It makes him look down upon and despise the business of sin and the dissipations of the world, and relinquish these, just as a man who is full grown will give up the toys of childhood,—just as a thirsty man will turn away from the filthy puddle when he comes within sight of the fountain of living waters. Those are exceedingly mistaken, therefore, who are ready to pity Christians because they think they are restrained from those amusements and those dissipations which seem essential to their very existence. But let such remember that Christians are not restrained from them: they are weaned from them; and they are weaned from them by the discovery and realization of something infinitely better.

Sept. 12.—*That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness unto his marvellous light,*
1 Pet. ii. 9.

OBSERVE THE DUTY ENJOINED: it is, "that they may show forth the praises" of their Benefactor and Deliverer. God has always had a grand object in view, and this object must be his own glory, for this reason:—as he is the greatest of beings, and the best of beings, every other end must be infinitely inferior to his own glory and honour. "Of him, and to him, and through

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him, are all things, to whom be glory." All his works praise him, but his highest praise springs from his own redeemed and saved people. He says, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." They do this *passively* and *actively*. He does not intend their religion to be an *invisible* thing, but that it is to be *displayed*. They are to "show forth his praises;" and they do this even in their *sufferings*. Therefore says the prophet Isaiah, "Glorify the Lord in the fires." They do this when enabled to suffer according to his will. When Christians meet with an accident that lays them by from active services,—when months of affliction are allotted to them, and wearisome nights are appointed them,—they sometimes think their service for God is all over, when perhaps they are approaching the most useful period in all their lives. For nothing strikes like facts; nothing impresses like the passive graces of Christians when in patience they possess their souls, when though they mourn they murmur not. Then what impressions are often made in favour of true godliness on the minds of beholders, when they show forth the praises of the Lord in their *songs*! Thus the Psalmist says, "*Sing, ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*" "Make melody in your hearts, singing praises unto the Lord." That is the way, according to James, to sing praises:—"Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Our Saviour was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief for us, yet we read of his singing at the approach of his greatest agonies:—"He sang a hymn with his disciples." We should sing *personally*, and not by proxy. We shall all sing in heaven, and not depend upon the choir there. "That ye should show forth his praises:" this is the only part of divine worship in which we resemble the heavenly world: there repentance will be hid from our eyes; there faith will be changed to sight, and hope into enjoyment; there the days of our mourning will be ended. And we are to show forth his praises, not only with our lips, but also in our actions and in our lives, "by giving up ourselves to his service, and walking before him in righteousness and holiness all our days." But

"Our days of *praise* shall ne'er be past,
While life, or breath, or being last,
Or immortality endures."

Sept. 13.—*And before Mm shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the, goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.* Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

How lovely, glorious, and sublime are the appearances of nature! And yet all these are doomed to destruction. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." The animals are very superior to all inanimate productions. How remarkable are the qualities of many of them! while some of them surpass man in strength, the sagacity of others seems scarcely distinguishable from reason itself. Yet Solomon says, "The spirit of the beast goeth downward, and the spirit of man goeth upward." For they are not moral agents, nor destined to give account of themselves to God. But no *man* ever perished, or ever will perish: he had a beginning, but he will have no end. He dies indeed, but "the spirit returns to God who gave it." He dies indeed, but the body that enters the grave, and even sees corruption, will not remain there. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Men are not only God's creatures, but they are God's subjects too. He has given them not only appetites, but reason; not only passions, but conscience; he has given them not only blessings to enjoy, but laws to observe. They are capable of knowing his will; they are informed of it; they are bound to obey it. And "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ;" for "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Now, this is the subject here represented; and it is worthy our regard, that He who represents it here will himself occupy the chief place in the proceedings of that day, for "he shall come to be our Judge." What a contrast he must have perceived, at the time he uttered these words, between his condition then and his future grandeur! He was then "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" "He had not where to lay his head;" "He was despised and rejected of men;" but then he knew, he felt, that "before him should be gathered all nations," and that

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“the Son of man should come in his glory.” Observe, “all nations.” It must, therefore, include our own. It must include the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the professor and the profane. These will not only be spectators, but they will be parties concerned. It is a solemn thing for a man to be judged of his own conscience. Oh, how pleasing is the approval of that sentence, of that deputy of God within! but oh, how intolerable its frown! “The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” It is a solemn thing for a man to stand before an earthly tribunal with his property, his liberty, and his life at stake, to leave the court acquitted of all charges, to return to the bosom of his family, or to return to be confined again, not for trial, but for execution; but all this is nothing, “less than nothing and vanity,” compared with the arrangements and decisions here announced. Men are now variously intermingled, and it would not be safe for a mortal to undertake the task of separating’ them; for, as the Saviour in the parable says, “there would be danger lest, while he pulled up the tares, he should root up also the wheat with them; both, therefore, must grow together until the harvest.” Many ends are to be answered by this intermixture now,—many with regard to the wicked, many with regard to the godly themselves. And there is another reason to be assigned why the one is now imperfectly punished and the other is imperfectly rewarded; namely, that we are now under an introductory dispensation, that we are now in a state of discipline and trial. But hereafter comes a state of retribution:—“And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”

Sept. 14.—*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Matt. xxv. 41.*

THIS solemn sentence is designed not for declamation, but for belief. It has been given, not to be known, and explained, and comprehended, but to be left in undefined terrors, the forebodings of imagination. Let us, therefore, at once, passing by both the nature and duration of this punishment, briefly notice three things. The first regards its *certainty*. Let none

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imagine that these words will be found an idle tale. They are not the offspring of enthusiasm, nor the invention of priestcraft. No; the consciences of sinners often tell them so, notwithstanding all their wishes and endeavours to get rid of it. Such is the misery (however they may explain or soften it) that, if there were only a possibility or a probability of their enduring it, prudence would more than justify their submitting to all the self-denial which the gospel requires in order to avoid it. But before they can suppose that there is only possibility or probability in this case, before they can question the certainty of this sentence, they must prove either that he did not utter these words, or that, if he did utter them, they are unworthy of credence. What a task, then, a sinner imposes upon himself, before he can lay his apprehensions at rest and defy this denunciation!—that is, to prove either that the Bible is untrue, or that Jesus Christ is a deceiver. The second regards the *state* as not originally designed for man, but “prepared for the devil and his angels.” But when once prepared we see it will do as well for any other order of rebels, as well as for them. Those who do the works of the devil, having shared his guilt, will also share in his punishment. And thus they make the place their own, as Judas did; who, therefore, it is said, “went to his own place.” The third regards the *conduct* of those who fall under this dreadful malediction. And here some may be ready to exclaim, “Surely it must consist in crimes too great for human nature often to commit; surely the criminals must be Cains, or Pharaohs, or Belshazzars, or Herods, or Julians, or robbers, or thieves, or murderers,—murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers.” No such thing: the criminals are not here so described. They were free from many vices; they lived in easy circumstances; they were approved of by many of their fellow-creatures. What were they? They were dry-eyed and close-fisted; they were flint instead of flesh; they lived only for themselves. “For I was an-hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in, naked, and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an-hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer and say unto them, Inasmuch as ye did it

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not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”

Sept. 15.—*Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.* Eccles. vii. 10.

“REMEMBER,” says Moses, “the days of old; consider the years of many generations.” And he extends this injunction to the beginning of the world:—“Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth.” And we can do this; we have some information concerning the very earliest period of the human race. With regard to those who lived before the flood, indeed, our information is very brief and partial, not likely to gratify curiosity; but after the flood, with regard to the new world and the division of nations, and especially the concerns of one particular people, from whom, as concerning the flesh, the Messiah was to come, we have ample materials; and we have the advantage of knowing that these accounts are to be depended upon, because they were written by “holy men of God, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Before the close of revelation, however, we have also several useful pieces of uninspired civil history, and in great abundance afterwards, so that we can easily run back through ages and generations. For it is not with us as it is with some countries, where former times are only known by tradition, or by a few rude monuments of earth or stone. With the documents we possess, we can inquire concerning the former days. Only, in doing this, there are three cautions we should be careful to regard. The first is, to see that our aim in this be not only, or principally, mere amusement; but that we endeavour to derive lessons, mental and moral, and religious instruction, from the characters and the events recorded. Secondly, We must be careful how we place implicit confidence in history, and endeavour to distinguish between fiction and truth. We know how hard it is to ascertain facts, even with regard to what occurs in our own day and in our own neighbourhood, and that we must inquire again and again, and how, while we are examining, one thing drops off after another, till at length

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the reality scarcely bears any correspondence with the report. What then must the greater part of all ancient history be? And in nothing is this caution so necessary as in ecclesiastical history, which was nearly all written by the parties themselves,—that is, churchmen, popish churchmen, who always endeavoured to exalt themselves at the expense of others, and to represent any who differed from them as heretics, schismatics, or infidels. Hence a man familiar with such history has ventured to say, though extravagantly, that “all ecclesiastical history is one continued lie.” Thirdly, We must relinquish the prejudice which Solomon assails when he says, in our present motto, “Say not, What is the cause that the former days were better than these?” No, the thing is not true; we ought to be wiser than the ancients, for we are much more ancient than they. Certainly the world is older now than it was ages ago. Surely mankind are not incapable of intellectual or moral progression and social improvement. Were the former days better than these as to benevolence and charity? Where were then the asylums for the blind, and various other institutions which have risen up to meet the necessities of suffering humanity? Were the former days better than these in the administration of justice with regard to civil liberty? How much better understood now are the rights of subjects and the limits of rulers! Were the former days better than these as to religious liberty? How little, formerly, were the rights of private judgment and of conscience understood! And were the former days better than these as to religion? What trammels has religion not thrown off in the fooleries of the past,—in the subtleties of the schools, in the enactments of superstition, in the decrees of councils, and in a thousand useless and silly decrees and controversies! We may, therefore, well say, “The lines are fallen unto us,” not only in “pleasant places,” but in pleasant times; “and we have a goodly heritage.”

Sept. 16.—*Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord.*

Ps. cxix. 65.

THE Lord's people will always have a good word to speak concerning their Lord and Saviour. If they are asked whether he has not been a *good Master*, they will tell us that he has never been

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unreasonable or severe in any of his demands. Ask them whether they have not had reason to speak well of his name: they will tell us, at the end of twenty, thirty, forty, or sixty years spent in his service, that he never has laid more upon them than he enabled them to bear. Our performances have been very poor, but he has smiled upon them, and has said, "She hath done what she could." Some of his servants have been laid by through sickness, and could do nothing; but he has never sent them away to the hospital! No; but he has nourished them kindly at home. Some of them are now grown old, and can expect to do little or nothing for him now; but he has not forsaken them. He does not cast off his servants in the time of old age: he says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth." And if we ask them whether he has not been to them a powerful Helper when they went to him pressed down with a sense of weakness, he said, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "My strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness," and "as thy days so shall thy strength be." They thought that such an approaching calamity would entirely overwhelm them, but with the season came the seasonable grace,— "Grace to help them in time of need." They can now say, with David, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." And if we look back and see the stones we have erected all along the journey of life, some of them in secret places, but we know where to find them; some of them, perhaps, are now covered over with nettles and thorns; yet, removing these, we can read them again:—"Hitherto," and "hitherto," and "hitherto, hath the Lord helped me." Yes; and has he not also been our kindest friend? "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Has this been too expressive of the tenderness of his consolation? When others have forsaken us, he has been with us even "in trouble," and principally then. As our Friend he has reproved us, but "faithful are the wounds of a friend;" and as Joseph, when he spoke roughly to his brethren, was obliged to turn away and weep, "for his bowels yearned within him," so he has said, "Is Ephraim, my dear son, is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still: therefore

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my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." He has corresponded with his people; he has visited them; and, when unable to go to his house, they have found him in the chamber of sickness, comforting them on the bed of languishing, and saying to their souls "I am thy salvation." And he has been to his servants, the best of portions. There was a time when we said, "The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him;" "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" Our expectations from him, from that hour, were very large; and we were commanded to "ask, that we might receive, that our joy might be full." And has he failed us? Has he not said to us, "Have I been a barren wilderness, a land of drought?" And now, therefore, after so many past days, we are saying, He has done for me "exceeding abundantly above all that I could ask or think."

Sept. 17.—*Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* Matt. vi. 34.

PEOPLE are often very anxious about things which they never realize; but death, personal or relative, their own death, or the deaths of others, have shown them the vanity of these apprehensions. Some have dreaded a public calamity; but they were taken away from the evil to come, like Noah's father, a year before the flood. They have been distressed, because they had little or no provision made for old age; but they died before the evil day came. They were concerned because they had not laid up enough for their children; and their dear children only required of them the expenses of their burial. Ah, "take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." All our inquiries concerning the days to come are vain; yea, and these inquiries are improper, for the Saviour says, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." No, they are wisely and kindly concealed from us. Three conclusions are derivable from this. The first is, That we should commit ourselves to God by prayer, that we may be prepared for all our future days, whatever may be their complexion. Secondly, That we should beware of presumption, and say, "The Lord shall choose mine inheritance for

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me.” “Go to, now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.” Thirdly, We should equally guard against despondency; for, though we know not what our future days may be, we know that nothing they contain in them will happen by chance. One thing we know:—that “all the ways of the Lord” towards us will be “mercy and truth.” One thing we know:—that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” And, therefore, this should ease us of a burden too heavy for us to bear; and we should “be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Sept. 18.—*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.* 1 John ii. 6.

LET us remember that we must “bear the image of the heavenly,” as we “have borne the image of the earthly;” that the “same mind” must “be in us that was in him;” that we are Christians no further than we are “joined to the Lord” and “of one Spirit;” for “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And are we then imitators of the good One? Are we those who cannot “condescend to men of low estate,” who answer roughly, who despise the poor? Are these imitators of the good One,—of Him who said, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,”—“of Him who was “in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”? Are those who are resentful, who, though it be “the glory of a man to pass by a transgression,” cannot forgive a trifling, perhaps an unintentional, offence in a fellow-creature or a fellow-Christian? Are these imitators of the good One, who said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” even while they were murdering him? Are those who are slothful, who live but to eat, and to drink, and to

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slumber, and to saunter? Are these imitators of the good One,—of Him who said, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh wherein no man can work”? Are those who are covetous, who join field to field and house to house, who only mind earthly things,—are these imitators of the good One,—of Him who said, “Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth,” “give alms of such things as ye have,” “and behold, all these things shall be added unto you”? And are the niggardly, who have this world’s goods, and their brethren have need, and shut up their bowels of compassion against them, are these imitators of the good One,—of Him who, “when he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,” “who loved us and gave himself for us”? Are those who are prayerless, imitators of the good One,—of Him who rose up early before it was day and went into a certain place and there prayed,—who “went up into a mountain and continued all night in prayer to God,”—are these imitators of the good One? Are those who mourn and repine under every trial by which they are exercised? Are these imitators of the good One,—of Him who, “though a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” yet in the midst of the church sang praises unto God, and said, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Oh, happy is he who is able to say, with dear Bunyan’s Pilgrim, “I always loved to hear of my Lord; and whenever I saw the print of his shoe I wished to put my foot there.” Happy they who can sing, with Dr. Watts,—

“Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal.

Such deference to thy Father’s will,

Such love, and meekness so divine,

I would transcribe and make them mine.”

Sept. 19.—*Now, he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.* 2 Cor. v. 5.

THE Christian’s present attainments consist in God’s work and God’s bestowments. God has prepared his people for the whole, and he has given them a part; and this constitutes the present state of indulgence in which the Christian now is. “Now, he hath wrought us (says the apostle) for the selfsame thing.” This preparation is *absolutely necessary*. In vain should we have

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a title to heaven unless we have a meetness for it. If people used the same common sense in religious affairs which guides them in the ordinary concerns of life, they would be preserved from many a mistake; and many of them would immediately see that, according to their present state, there is no probability or possibility of their happiness were they now to die. For common sense surely must tell them that every state and every office requires a qualification for it; and that the higher the state or the office may be, the more important and difficult it is to obtain the qualification becoming it. Common sense would tell them, if they referred to their own feelings, that happiness is not derived from any one thing, without a suitableness for it; it would tell them that happiness depends not upon the excellency of the object, but upon conformity to it. Common sense would tell them, if they appealed to their feelings, that that which is not wanted, which is not desired, which is not valued, would, if attained, afford them no gratification, and, therefore, the thing is whether we are now in possession of any thing that would enable us to relish and to enjoy heaven; not the heaven of pagans, nor the heaven of Mohammedans, nor yet the heaven of those who are only looking for exemption from distress and trouble, but the Christian heaven,—the heaven which is derived from the presence, the vision and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his own prayer:—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Oh, we could trust any Christian here upon this ground. We know his principles and dispositions. He has that in him which would enable him to relish and enjoy such blessedness. But, secondly, He will remember and acknowledge with the apostle that this experience is as *divine* as it is necessary. He will allow that he has not wrought himself for the "selfsame thing;" that creatures have not wrought him "for the selfsame thing;" that the effect was above the production of education, of example, of moral suasion; that it was of divine operation. Hence it arises that it is frequently held forth by the figure of a creation, the figure of a resurrection, in order to remind us not only of the grandeur of the work, but of the ability of Him that hath performed it. Therefore the apostle says, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God."

Sept. 20.—*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

1 Cor. xii. 4.

MEN have always been wishing for uniformity; and, in religious concerns, how many have been sacrificed to that Moloch! While men have always been seeking after uniformity, God has always been producing variety. There is variety in the heaven of heavens,—cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. There is variety in the skies:—“One star differeth from another star in glory.” There is variety in the seasons,—morning and evening, summer and winter, spring and autumn. There is variety in the productions of the earth,—in the forest, the field, and the garden. It would be strange, therefore, indeed, if we had nothing but sameness and equality and uniformity in the church of God. But it is otherwise: there are differences,—numerous differences. If the subjects of divine grace are examined, there will be found differences among them. There are differences in their natural talents: one excels in memory, another in judgment, another in speech. There are differences in their natural tempers: some are sanguine and warm, others are cold and phlegmatic; some are bold as a lion, others are timid as a dove. In this view, what a difference was there between the severe Toplady and the candid Doddridge,—between the rough Knox and the mild Leighton,—between the forward Peter and the retiring John! There are differences in their very graces too: we have more zeal in one, more humility in another, more resignation in a third, more liberality in a fourth, and so of the rest. One is weak in faith, another is strong; one has a trembling hope, another possesses the “full assurance of hope:” yet all are partakers of His grace. There are differences in their destinations, in their appointments, in their functions. One man is called to do a public work, and a public work requires great talents and strong passions, and he is furnished with them; another is called to move in private and domestic life, and he is fitted by those gentle qualities which embellish and adorn it. Now, let us observe what use the apostle makes of this diversity in the church of God. He applies it to two purposes. The first is to *encourage those who feel that they are not what others are*, but are yet parts of the same body too. “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand I am not of

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the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, is it therefore not of the body?" And then he applied it also to *prevent pride and disdain among those who view others as not equal to themselves*. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Let us, then, operate according to our position, according to the functions to which God hath called us, according to our ability and our opportunity.

Sept. 21.—*He hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*

2 Cor. v. 5.

AN earnest is a portion of payment, and, therefore, is very distinguishable from a pledge. A pledge is something returnable at the completion of the agreement; but an earnest remains, and goes on as a part of the bargain. Now, this is very instructive, and shows us what a Christian possesses in the agency and influence of the Holy Spirit; and the presence of these not only indicates a heaven, with regard to him, that is to come, but that he has something which partakes of that heaven: he has a part of it already; he has "the earnest of the Spirit." "We may consider heaven three ways. And in each of these we may see that he who has the Spirit of God has the earnest of it. *It is a state of perfect knowledge.* The Christian has now the earnest of it in the illumination of the Spirit. The eyes of his understanding are opened, and he begins now to view things as he will view them hereafter in the irradiation of eternity when he enters the inheritance of the saints in light. Heaven is a state *of perfect purity*, and the Christian has the earnest of it in the sanctification of the Spirit. The Spirit has made him a partaker of God's own holiness. He has delivered him from the dominion and love of sin, he has renewed him in the spirit of his mind, and he has produced in him those principles which enable him to say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Heaven is also a state *of perfect enjoyment*. It is joy,—"a fulness of joy." It consists of "pleasures that are for evermore." Well, the Christian has the earnest of all this joy, of all those pleasures in what the Scriptures call "the joy of the Holy Ghost." Christians are already blessed. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in

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the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God;" but, says the apostle, "We which have believed do enter into rest." They will, therefore, "enter into peace;" but now they have "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." They will, in heaven, dwell in his praise, and be still praising him; but now, even now, they are living, and are realizing the same blessed enjoyments, and can say, with David, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Thus heaven, with regard to them, is not an unknown state. They have an acquaintance with it already; and they know more of it from their own experience than from all the sermons they ever heard, than from all the books they ever read in their lives. Heaven to them is not a future distant good only; it is a present indulgence. Heaven has entered them before they have entered heaven. They have everlasting life; they are "made partakers" of a glory that is to be revealed; and therefore, in the language of the apostle to the Hebrews, they are said to have already "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Sept. 22.—*From you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.* 1 Thess. i. 8.

AND it sounded out from them in four ways. First, by *their acting and living* so as to render the gospel noted, remarkable, renowned. They adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, and ornaments are always noticed by others. As Dr. Watts sings,—

"Then shall we best proclaim, abroad
The honours of our Saviour-God,
When his salvation works within,
And grace subdues the power of sin."

It is thus that we are to hold forth the word of life, by our tempers, by our lives, our actions, our sufferings, and our enjoy-

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ments. Secondly, They sounded out the word of the Lord by their *verbal announcement and recommendation*. For this they had opportunities in conversation with individuals, and we have all these opportunities, more or less. They had these opportunities also when they travelled, whether their excursions were those of pleasure, or friendship, or business; for very much trade was carried on by the Thessalonians, owing to the fine port which they had; and so they had intercourse with all the neighbouring countries, and this was, in their case, overruled for good, this gave them opportunities of seeing others and addressing them. There are some persons who travel without their religion: they are afraid or ashamed to have their religious connections known. But these Thessalonians, when they travelled, took their religion along with them. There are others who keep God out of their offices and warehouses and shops; for what business has God there? They are not concerned either to hold forth the spirit of the gospel, or to speak of divine things, while they are dealing with men in worldly concerns. But this was not the case with the Thessalonians: they took opportunities to drop something that might operate on the minds of those who heard them. It was said of the great Archbishop Usher, that when he was in any company he was accustomed to say, "Let us not separate without a word of Christ." I wonder how this would be remarked if an archbishop of our day were to say this when surrounded with a company of modern divines. The third way in which they sounded out the word of the Lord in all places was *by their letters* as well as by their discourses. The sentiment conveyed in a letter is often peculiarly impressive, because it is addressed to and appropriated by the individual. And, Fourthly, They sounded out the word of the Lord *by the messengers and missionaries whom they employed and sustained in the work of faith and labour of love*. Now, we are not to suppose this was peculiar, or confined to them, though it was very much their practice in those various ways to sound forth the word of the Lord in every place; but we shall find the same disposition in all the partakers of divine grace recorded in the Scriptures. They all added to their personal religion relative zeal. Even David, hero and conqueror as he was, was a kind of preacher and teacher. "Then," says he, "will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

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“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” Thus it was with the first Christians, as John tells us:—“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Thus Andrew, as soon as he had found the Messiah, brought his brother Peter. Peter, as soon he had found him, brought his friend Nathanael; and the woman of Samaria, as soon as she had found him, brought her neighbours to him.

Sept. 23.—*And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord.*

I Thess. i. 6.

LET us view these Thessalonians as followers or *imitators*, for so is the word rendered in the margin. Observe, they “became followers of us,” says the apostle; that is, of himself, and his fellow-labourers, and his fellow-Christians; that is, they resembled them in their faith, their hope, their love, their patience, their holiness, and their good works. Let us enter a little into this. Man, as we all know, is an imitative creature. The first voluntary efforts that are made by children are always endeavours to mimic something which they have seen. But as man is a depraved creature, and as he is exposed to bad examples in this world as well as good, and more to bad examples than good, he naturally follows “the multitude to do evil;” and the question with him, therefore, concerning any thing, is not, Is it true? or, Is this reasonable? or, Is this righteous? but, “What will people think or say of me? shall I not be seen? Why, all the Lord’s people are “a peculiar people,” and it argues much more dignity of principle and purity of motive to advance alone than under the applause of thousands. This disposition, we see, was in the case of the Thessalonians sanctified, for it was turned another way. For the men whom they now followed, or imitated, or copied, were few compared with the rest, and had nothing of a worldly kind to recommend them. No, they were esteemed as the very filth and offscouring of all things. Yet, with Moses, these Thessalonians “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” With David they could say, “I am a companion of

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all them that fear thee, of them that keep thy statutes." So it always is when persons are made "wise unto salvation:" then they immediately see that "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbours," and that of them "the world is not worthy." They pray, "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." Then they forsake the sons and daughters of folly and vice, and run and take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." But this is not all: "Ye became," says the apostle, "imitators of us and of the Lord," adding this, "and of the Lord," for two reasons. First, *to show us their confidence*, that they were persuaded that they were fully conformed unto Christ, and that those who followed them thus far would be followers of him. Therefore says the apostle to the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Did he mean to place himself upon a level, then, with Christ? By no means; but to assert that he knew he was walking in the same way, that he was influenced by the same principles, that he felt the same sentiments. And we must be conscious of this too; yes, we must remember that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Secondly, *To teach us that no men are to be our examples, any further than they resemble him*; that we are not to give up ourselves absolutely to any leaders, however distinguished by gifts or graces. We are not to pin our faith upon their sleeve, nor to determine our actions by their practice invariably. No, they are all fallible. The wisest of men have their follies, the best of men have their faults: the wisest and the best of men, therefore, may lead us astray. Abraham denied his wife at Gerah. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. Job cursed the day of his birth. Peter said, with an oath, "I know not the man." But here we have, in the Lord Jesus, an infallible pattern, and therefore we should give up ourselves entirely to his direction and influence, that it may be said of us also, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Sept. 24.—*I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.* Sol. Song vi. 11.

THERE are three kinds of trees spoken of here. There are, first, nuts: indeed, it is called “a garden of nuts.” These trees abounded here, and formed rows, shady walks, and yielded fruit. Nuts are a very common and yet a very agreeable fruit, and very nutritious. Some, however, question whether hazel-nuts are here intended, or those of the almond kind. However this may be, here are also vines; and of these there are many species. There is nothing remarkable in the appearance of a vine. It is noticed for weakness; its tendrils always require support and to be sustained, and there they lean and flourish. But it is famous for fruit; and, indeed, but for this it would be good for little, for there is nothing valuable that can be made out of its wood; and, as Ezekiel says, were it not for its fertility it would be only fit for the fire. But nothing can equal its luxuriousness and fertility. And then we have pomegranates, concerning which we may observe, there is nothing of stateliness in its growth, but its blossoms are large, and the apples are exceedingly beautiful, and of a reddish colour without and within; and we may see how these trees were valued by the frequency of the reference to them in this song, and by Moses calling the land of Canaan “a land of vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates.” The high-priests’ long robe was to have attached to it, alternately, a golden bell and a pomegranate. Thus Moses said, “Beneath, upon the hem of it, thou shalt make the pomegranate of blue, and of purple and scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about, a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.” And on the network which covered the two pillars of the temple, Jachin and Boaz, there were no less than two hundred thousand flowers of pomegranate courses. But, without making a comparison between Christians and these trees and vines and pomegranates, though they may all have their appropriate significance, we find, however these trees may differ from each other, that all of them are actually growing in the same garden, having been placed there by the same Owner; and, however distinguished from each other, they stand in the very same

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state, and are in the same relation to him and to each other. We learn from hence that we should not look for every kind of fruit from the same individual,—that we are not to go to the nut-bush for grapes, or to the vine for the pomegranate. We cannot expect to find all these fruits upon the same tree: it is enough if each bear according to his kind. And we should not envy any, or wish to fill their places or to enjoy their opportunities, but use and improve our own talents; and those who have only one, and use and improve it, God will regard them as approvingly as if they had five. For “the Lord looketh to the heart;” and, where this is towards him, he accepts us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. Only we should remember the commendation he bestowed on Mary,—“She hath done what she could,”—and be concerned to gain the approving sentence which he pronounced upon one of the churches:—“Thou hast laboured, and hast not failed. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first.”

“Honour and shame from no condition rise:
Act well thy part, there all true honour lies.”

Sept. 25.—*I went down to see whether the pomegranates budded.*

Sol. Song vi. 11.

OBSERVE, the great Husbandman visits his garden, not only to look after the flourishing of the vine, but the budding of the pomegranates, so that when our Lord comes to examine his garden he looks after the beginnings of grace. We may learn from hence that there are degrees in the divine life. There are in the household of faith babes as well as young men, and young men as well as fathers. There is in the spiritual as well as in the natural husbandry, “first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.” There is in the shining of the sun the dawn and then the day. There is a difference between the bud and the blossom, and between the blossom and the fruit. But he looks after even the buddings of piety. What are these buddings? Oh, that is a fine bud when a man no longer restrains prayer before God, but cries, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” When his tear drops upon his Bible, and he says, “Lord, save, or I perish!” When he comes with weeping and supplication, and

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is led to the throne of grace, (for the Spirit of grace is always a Spirit of supplication,) oh, that is a fine bud, when the Saviour is no longer despised and rejected as having no form, nor comeliness, nor any beauty that we should desire him; but when the man begins to discern his loveliness, he begins to exclaim, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, yea, altogether lovely." Oh that I could once call him mine! One of the earliest buddings of religion is love to the Lord's people, and tenderness towards them, and delight in them; when they are viewed by them as a sacred people, longing above all to have fellowship with them on earth and in heaven,—oh, this is a hopeful sign! It is a fine bud when a man begins to love the Lord's day, to call the Sabbath a delight, to long for it to return. It is a fine bud when a man begins to love the house of God as "the place where his honour dwelleth," and when he begins also to love his Bible, and to read it as a new book, (for it is so now to him,) as a book that tells him what he has never thought of asking that book before,— "What must I do to be saved?"—though he had read it again and again; telling him "how to come before the Lord and bow himself before the high God," and where he can find wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and be "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." But why does the Saviour look after the very buddings of grace, and value these? We answer, because they are his own producing, the work of his own Spirit in the heart. And because they are necessary; for, though there may be buds without fruit, there can be no fruit without buds; though there may be a beginning without advancing or finishing, there can be no advancing or finishing without a beginning. These things, therefore, are essentially necessary. And because also they are sure pledges of something more. They are not like other buds: other buds may fall, and they often do fall, without bringing forth any fruit unto perfection; but it is not the case here. "We are confident of this very thing," says the apostle, "that he that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And, says David, "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever; forsake not the work of thine own hands." Then he does it because he sees perfectly what these buds will produce in good time. What does he see in them? He sees in them the peace of God, sees in them pardon, sees in

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them the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Oh, there is heaven in that bud! There is an immensity, an eternity of glory and blessedness, in that bud! It will bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

Sept. 26.—*Most men will proclaim, every one his own goodness.*
Prov. xx. 6.

LET us attend to this assertion, which expresses the commonness of self-applause. We may see it in *this nation*. What exultation and vanity! What extolling of our own laws, our own fashions, our own customs!—not to bless the Giver of all good, but to run down and disparage others. Thus the Jews called the Greeks “dogs;” and the Greeks accounted all besides themselves “barbarians.” We may see it also *in churches*. The Papists call themselves “The Catholic and Apostolic Church,” and admit of no salvation out of it. And how strangely do we hear Protestants speaking of other churches, (forgetting that by going back we can prove all are Dissenters!) With what arrogance do some religious denominations speak of themselves! How do they censure those who cannot pronounce their shibboleth! How do they say, in the language of their early predecessors, “Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou.” But let us pursue this subject more *personally*, lest we ourselves should escape; and, instead of regarding the faults of nations and of churches, let us be more forward to self-application. In the first class of those who proclaim their own goodness, we may place the *profane*. These tell us that they mean well; that their hearts are good,—as if the tree could be good and the fruit bad, or the streams be pure if the fountain were defiled. Secondly, The *Pharisees and the formalists*. What attempts do these make to recommend themselves to others! Our Saviour gives an account of one of these. And, after all, what did this man say? Only that he was not so bad as one who was very bad,—that he was free from scandalous vices, and performed duties in which, perhaps, his heart had no concern! And it is amazing what a slender foundation some rest their hope of eternal life upon. Where there is no faith, no repentance, no spirituality, no walking with God, persons entertain a full persuasion of their safety, nay, of the excellence of their character. Thirdly, The *Orthodox Bigot*,—

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those who have received their doctrines from men, while they are entire strangers to grace; whose religious opinions consist entirely in notions. Fourthly, *The Godly*. Even these are guilty in a measure. Thus, Peter was guilty of this when he said, "Though all men shall be offended, yet will not I. Though I die with thee, yet will I not deny thee!" And did not the event prove this? Possessors of godliness may talk too much about themselves. If we know, if we have enjoyed, if we have done any thing in itself good, let another praise us, and not our own lips. Persons may even speak of their infirmities and imperfections, in the hope that others will compliment them. Some angle for praise with the bait of humility. Some persons complain of themselves in such terms, that if another had said, "It is indeed true," they would never have spoken to him again. Alas! "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Sept. 27.—*A faithful man who can find?* Prov. xx. 6.

WE have here an intimation of the rareness of consistency. Who can find a man faithful, first, In his *civil concerns*? How do men run down and undervalue the article they mean to buy, and enhance the value of what they mean to sell! What deceit, equivocation, perjury, fraud, is practised between man and man! Secondly, In his *friendship*. The true friend loveth at all times. But "confidence in an unfaithful friend, in time of trouble, is like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint." He who attempts to eat with the one or to walk with the other would find it useless and painful. Job, David, and Paul found it so; and how was it with the Saviour himself? He suffered in all points like unto us; his disciples all "forsook him and fled." Thirdly, *To his trusts*. We are all stewards; and "it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." We are to consider all our endowments in the nature of a trust, all of which are to be employed for Him who conferred them upon us. Riches! Oh, what a trust is wealth! and how difficult to spend it as becometh Christians! Time! what a jewel! And the Scripture tells us to "redeem the time." Authority! what a trust is this! Some are placed over families, and are faithless to their trust unless they "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the

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Lord." Some are servants; well, and these are stewards, and are to be faithful to their employers, not only not purloining, (this is only half,) but not wasting; and also showing all good fidelity, that they may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Fourthly, *To his convictions*. Few are so hardened as not to have many of these. God only knows what many do with them. Some they assassinate, some they check, some they starve, some they put off, saying, "Go thy way for this time." Fifthly, *To his religious professions*. How many there are to whom the Saviour says, "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I have commanded?" Why do ye assume the name of Christ and not depart from iniquity? A Christian is never more useful than when he avoids inconsistencies. But in considering the inconsistencies of others, we may push the matter too far and become censorious. There are many faithful men, and their number is increasing, and "the Lord add unto them, how many soever there be, an hundredfold." And they are as excellent as they are rare. They have defects and blemishes; but even now "their rejoicing," not their glorying, "is the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they have their conversation in the world." Such men are likely to rise in the esteem of those around them; but if not, if men should overlook them, God has his eye upon them; if they are now beclouded, they shall soon shine in the firmament of God. As the stars sparkle in the heavens, so do the promises of Scripture shine upon them:—"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Sept. 28.—*Who remembered us in our low estate.*

Ps. cxxxvi. 23.

LET us contemplate "our low estate." In doing so, we observe, first, That this is *our natural state, hut not our original condition*. Man was made a little lower than the angels, and God gave him dominion over all his works. What completed his elevation was, that God created him in his own image in righteousness and true holiness; but here is the sad conclusion:—God made man upright, but he soon sought out many inventions. Mankind retain traces of their original grandeur.

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Enough is left to convince a man that he is greatness in ruins. His fall is low even in comparison with his present powers, Man is still high in the scale of his capacities, being endowed with reason, conscience, and immortality. The expansion of his capacity and of his improvement is boundless. This is apparent in the knowledge that man can acquire of the arts and sciences; in his skill, in measuring the distances of the stars; in the achievements he is continually making to excite our wonder and admiration; but so much the more degraded does he appear, when we see him, with these capabilities, "earthly, sensual, and devilish." What a sight for an angel!—an heir of immortality, "led captive by the devil at his will," and a slave to his own appetites, passions, and vices! Secondly, Let us consider him *in relation to God*. A creature never thinking of his Creator, —a child unmindful of his heavenly Father,—a beneficiary who never remembers his Benefactor. God is not in all his thoughts; and, if he ever approaches him, he is repulsed as an unwelcome intruder. He says unto God, Depart from me, "I desire not a knowledge of thy ways." Thirdly, Let us view him with regard to *mankind*. All his fellow-creatures are really his brethren; he is bound by the law of his being, to regard his neighbour as himself. But, alas, how one man is trying to take advantage of the ignorance and weakness of his fellow-man! How frequently is friendship but a mere commerce of advantage! government, a system of intrigue and corruption!—man seeking glory in fields of blood, in desolated houses and demolished towns, in weeping widows and fatherless children! Fourthly, In relation to *inferior creatures*. So low has man sunk, that to humble him he is sent to learn wisdom of the beasts that perish. Yea, the Scriptures represent men as being lower than the beasts:—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Fifthly, Let us consider how low is man's condition with regard to *his body*. Paul calls it a "vile body." How numerous its infirmities! How offensive its diseases, requiring all the force of friendship to discharge the common duties of humanity! And then, a few days after it has ceased to breathe, we must hide its shame in the earth; and then Abraham comes to mourn for his once fair and beautiful Sarah, and to weep for her, and says, "Give me possession of a burial-place with you, that I may bury

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my dead out of my sight." There is only one state lower, and that is *Hell*. And man is reduced to this:—

"Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At hell's dark door we lay."

Alas! these are not exceptions, as some might suppose, from the general rule. We have not gone to the very dregs of society for our representations. We have the language of God in his word to set forth man's awful degradation. Here he is represented as being "in a horrible pit, wherein is no water," as being in the "region of the shadow of death," as "ready to perish." And we are told that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;" that "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," and that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" "for from within out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within and defile the man." These views of human nature and of our natural condition, though very mortifying, are true, and not only true, but useful and necessary. They are necessary to explain the scheme of the gospel, and to prepare us for and induce us to seek after the blessedness it is designed to convey.

Sept. 29.—Who remembered us *in our low estate*.

Ps. cxxxvi. 23.

WE are here called upon to contemplate and admire the divine remembrance. Though we have forgotten him, he has not forgotten us. Observe what is included in this. When we are called upon to remember all the way the Lord our God has led us in the wilderness, or when young people are exhorted to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, something more than an intellectual process is enjoined. It is a remembrance which combines all proper feelings and actions. So God's remembrance of us implies his regard, and this expression of it appears in five particulars. First, *In his providing a Saviour for us*. This is the grand instance of his affectionate remembrance:—"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that who-

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soever believeth on him should not perish hut have everlasting life." He sent not an angel, but the Lord of angels; not a servant, but his "own Son," and "his only-begotten Son;" and surely "he that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will with him freely give us all things." Secondly, *In furnishing us with a divine revelation*. For what advantage could we derive from him unless we knew him? How could we call upon him of whom we had never heard? The dying patriarch said, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be;" but how shall we repair to him unless we have been informed of him? But unto us is "the word of this salvation sent." Thirdly, *In appointing the means of grace*. This led him to set apart one day out of seven to recall man from all his cares to the consideration of the "one thing needful," and to institute the Christian ministry, and to raise up a succession of those who should "show unto men the way of salvation," and to "devise other means, that his banished ones be not expelled from him:" so he throws in the sinner's way a good book: he bereaves him of a friend, or takes away his worldly substance, or strikes down the wife of his youth; or sickness comes and seizes him, and, detaching him from the crowd, lays him upon a bed of languishing; and now he is brought with weeping and supplication to seek the Lord. "Lo! these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." Fourthly, *In bestowing upon them supplies of grace*. He says to them, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me." Zion said, indeed, "My God hath forgotten me;" but this was a wrong conclusion. "Can a woman," says God, "forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget. Yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." So he sends them from time to time the influences of his Spirit, to make them equal to their trials and conflict. And lastly, *He does not forget to correct them* when they need the rod, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And having in all these respects remembered us in our low estate, he will not now be unmindful of his promise:—"Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong on the

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behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." And, says the apostle, "All things work together for good to them that love God." And here the Psalmist says, "Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth forever."

Sept. 30.—*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

THE apostle here speaks of three graces, and compares them with other gifts, and with each other. In a former chapter he speaks of various gifts which were bestowed upon different churches, and says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts;" and then adds, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way." He unquestionably means the acquiring the graces of the Holy Spirit. These extraordinary gifts might have been possessed by those who had not received the grace of God: this is plain from the language of our Lord, who says, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Gifts, therefore, are no real evidence of true godliness, but the graces of the Spirit evince a change of heart and accompany salvation. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." And he says, "To that man will I look who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." It is also obvious that these extraordinary gifts were only of a temporary duration; they tended to establish Christianity, and were then to disappear. We have no substantial proof of their existence after the apostolic era; for, says the apostle, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." "But now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." These will be always first, and will always be necessary, in all ages and conditions of the church. We may here notice two things. The first regards the *meaning of the name*. The word charity has now generally obtained a very defective signification, meaning alms-deeds, or the succour afforded to the indigent and afflicted. It does, indeed, include this; for "whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from

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him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" But then it comprehends much more than alms-deeds: its simple meaning is, love to God and love to man. These are inseparable in their principles and exercises. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "This commandment have we from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also." And yet Paul here views charity principally with regard to our fellow-creatures, and as exercised in a way of benevolence and beneficence. This is obvious from the preceding verses. In examining the portrait, see what a painter Paul was, and how he makes the figure step forth from the canvas to display its beauty. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Secondly, we remark *that the pre-eminence of charity, here assigned, is not universal*. It is not the greatest in all respects: in some respects faith is greater than charity. We are "saved through faith," not through charity; we are "justified by faith," not by charity: "The life which we live in the flesh we live by faith," not by charity. And in some respects hope is greater than charity "we are saved by hope," not by charity. "Hope is the helmet of salvation:" this guards the head in the day of battle, not charity. "Hope is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," not charity. We do not, therefore, undervalue faith and hope. All the stars shine, but "one star differeth from another star in glory."

Oct. 1.—*The greatest of these is charity.* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

ALL the daughters of religion do virtuously, but charity excelleth them all:—"The greatest of these is charity;" and this will abundantly appear from *the testimony and authority of Scripture*. There is the authority of God, whose judgment is always according to truth. Are these words the words of Paul, and did he speak as he was moved by the Holy Ghost? Then unquestionably the greatest of these is charity. What besides, in these

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inspired records, has such titles and commendations? It is called "a new commandment." It is urged by new motives, enforced by a dignified example,—an example the most complete and motives the most powerful. It is called "the bond of perfectness." What grace is there besides this of which it is said, "It is the fulfilling of the law"? Is this ever said of faith or hope? It is the end of the gospel as well as of the law; and therefore the apostle says, "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." "This is the commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." This is what is called the "law of faith," the badge by which others judge of the followers of Christ:—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,—if ye have love one to another." It is the test by which ye are to judge yourselves. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" and in the proceedings of the last day it will govern the decision of the Judge of all. For upon this the sentence will finally turn; graciously as to the righteous, but meritoriously as to the wicked. "Then shall the King say, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto these my brethren, ye did it not unto me."

Oct. 2.—*A chosen generation.* 1 Peter ii. 9.

It is of Christians the apostle is here speaking. We allow there is an especial reference to the Jews as the commonwealth of Israel, and in an important sense the words may be exemplified in their privileges and prerogatives; they were indeed "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people." But they were always designed to be typical of another, a nobler community. "For," says the apostle, "if we are Christ's then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' We may observe, therefore, while there is a reference to the Jews, the representation is intended to be significant of real Christians who, as the apostle says, are "the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and who have no confidence in the flesh." We must not judge of persons by their outward rank, but by their spirituality. The precious sons of Zion gays Jeremiah, "comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter." But

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if they are afflicted they are comforted in all their affliction and distress. If they are poor in this world's good, they are "rich in faith," and rich towards God. If they are despised and rejected of men, they are "chosen of God and precious." They are here described as a "chosen generation." A generation is a duration of beings measured by an age. Hence it is said, "David served his generation according to the will of God;" that is, he served those who lived in his days. A generation means posterity, and it is used for offspring. Thus, it is written, "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." They are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. Of the Messiah it is predicted, "He shall see his seed;" and again, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." Mortality enters the church as well as the world. "Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Those who are partakers of divine grace "are not suffered to continue by reason of death." But if they die, others rise up in their room, and thus the generation remain, and will remain to the end of time; and the "gates of hell"—that is, of death and the grave—"shall not prevail against them." But they are a *chosen* generation. It is absurd to suppose that God does any thing without design, or that he does what he does without choosing to do it. This choice regards, not, as some persons imagine, things only, but persons, and not only persons collectively, but individually; and not only has a regard to temporal, but a reference to eternal, concerns. And this choice was not only free and sovereign, but altogether gracious. Therefore, saith the apostle, as the ground of his argument, because "God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth," they are "a chosen generation."

Oct. 3.—*They do not return unto the Lord their God, nor seek him.* Hosea vii. 10.

THE history of the Jews is very peculiar. It abounds with miracles and wonders and signs, and, in perusing it, nothing strikes us more than the frequency and severity of God's reprimands concerning them. The general resemblance between them and us, and the non-improvement of means and mercies, is the

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ground of our present meditation. How far does this neglect of seeking the Lord extend? Are there no exceptions? Yes, blessed be God, there are; for "except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." We should have had no "chariots of Israel, or horsemen thereof." We should have had no "repairers of the breach," no "restorers of paths to dwell in." But the language of Scripture is very awful upon this subject. Isaiah said in his days, "There is none that calleth upon God, that stirreth up himself to take hold of God." David says, "There is none that seeketh after God." And John says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Now, this language, if it does not imply universality, unquestionably expresses generality. Let us see, therefore, how far this testimony is true and is confirmed by experience and observation. For this purpose we will glance at five classes of delinquents. In the first class we place *infidels*, who, if they do not deny the being of a God, deny his moral providence and government, and a future state, and even deem the revelation God has given us nothing better than a cunningly-devised fable. These do not seek the Lord. In the second class we place the *profligate*. These hide not their sin as Sodom, but publish it like unto Gomorrah. Liars, swearers, blasphemers, the unclean, drunkards, these do not seek the Lord. In the third class we place the *careless*. Though not vicious, yet they seem indifferent to every thing of a religious nature. Gallios, "who care for none of these things," who "cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God," who never read the Scriptures, never hear the word preached, never attend the house of God unless from the influence of reputation or connections, nor observe the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Heaven is hid from their view; earth contains all they desire. To get money and spend it, to dress and adorn the body, to nurse it in sickness and pamper it in health, and to endeavour to answer the question, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"—this engrosses the whole of their attention. These do not seek the Lord their God. In the fourth class we place *formalists*. God requires truth in the inward parts, and "in the hidden parts." He makes his people "to know wisdom." "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," or they do not, in his estimation, worship him

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at all. "We read of some in the days of Isaiah, of whom he says, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God." But how was it really? Isaiah tells them, "They draw near to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, while their heart is far from him." They sing, but not "with melody in their hearts unto the Lord." They hear his word, but they are not "doers of it." "They have a name to live, but are dead." They have the form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. What numbers of these are members of the Christian church and yet are not partakers of Jesus Christ! "These do not seek the Lord their God." In the last class we place *partial seekers*. There are very few but have some fits and starts in religion, who have not recourse to some religious exercises at different times and places and conditions; and they are not always insincere at the time. But, alas! their "goodness is like the morning cloud and early dew." They begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh. They run well for a time, but are hindered. Their religion depends upon external excitements, not upon internal principles, and, therefore, fails with the cessation of these excitements. Their religion is like a tree without a root,—it soon withers away; or like a land-flood, which soon flows off, because it has no living stream to supply it. "They do not seek him with their whole hearts."

Oct. 4.—*They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek Mm for all this.* Hosea vii. 10.

How various and how numerous are the means which God is providing, and which he perpetually employs, as the preventions of sin and the excitements to holiness, or to induce men to seek the Lord their God! Of these, we may mention, first, The *profusion of benefits*, to draw men to God, "by the cords of love, and the bands of a man," in nature, in providence, in grace; local advantages, commercial advantages, civil advantages, intellectual advantages; mercies new every morning; the day laden with his benefits, and on the wings of every hour a display of his patience and forbearance; all his works praising him, and calling upon us to do the same; never leaving himself without witness, in that "he is continually doing us good, sending us rain and fruitful seasons, and filling

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our hearts with food and gladness;" the earth filled with his riches, and the year crowned with his goodness. And, notwithstanding they are thus favoured, "yet do they not seek the Lord their God for all this." Secondly, The *Scriptures* in our own hands and in our own tongue. "What advantage hath the Jew, or what profit is there in circumcision? Chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." We are indulged, and indulged in a much higher degree in this view. "To us is the word of this salvation sent," and sent in its completest form; for we have, in addition to Moses and the prophets, the evangelists and the apostles. We have the blessed volume, containing the glad tidings of salvation, filled up with doctrines, precepts, promises, motives, principles, and addressed to every passion in the human bosom. And yet, notwithstanding, "They seek not the Lord their God for all this." Thirdly, The *Gospel ministry*, so that men can not only read the word, but hear the "words of eternal life." They have the advantage of the living address of man to man. Yes, life has been perilled by accident, so that there was but a step between them and death. And then sickness has seized them, and drawn them down to the very gates of the grave, through the bars of which they looked into an awful eternity, and shuddered and said, "Oh, spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more!" and yet they do not seek the Lord for all this. Strange infatuation! Fourthly, The *power of conscience*. Some men find that "the way of transgressors is hard," and that it is very difficult to go on in sin as they have done: conscience has waylaid them, like the angel with the drawn sword, threatening Balaam. Conscience has said to that man, "Durst thou adventure? There is destruction in that course; there is death, there is hell, in that course. You are going to wade through the dearest blood of your soul, to plunge yourself into perdition. Oh, pause! Oh, forbear!" But he goes forward, in spite of his reflections afterwards! Notwithstanding all this remonstrance of conscience, "they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Then, fifthly, *The various addresses, reproofs, admonitions, and encouragements, derived from their various connections*. Yet "they seek not the Lord their God for all this." Lastly, We may mention *afflictions*. Sometimes their schemes are broken off, even the thoughts of their hearts. Sometimes their worldly substance is

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decreased in order to induce them to seek in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Sometimes death comes into the family, and bears off “the dear delights they once enjoyed and fondly called their own.”

Oct. 5.—*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.* Eph. v. 1, 2.

As God, the supreme Being, is the perfection and the Source of divine excellence, the greatest honour we can ever possess is to be like him. Accordingly, we were originally made after his own image, and when we are new-made we are “renewed after the image of him who created us in righteousness and true holiness;” and when we are sanctified we are said to be “partakers of the divine nature.” Oh to be like God! to resemble hira in his moral perfections,—to be holy, patient, tender, loving, like God! There are two things especially in which we are enjoined to resemble God: these are, *giving* and *forgiving*. Now, in forgiving, our Saviour teaches us, when we pray, to say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Now, all who use this prayer, and are implacable, ask God not to forgive them; for, says the Saviour, “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.” And what are the petty offences of our fellow-creatures compared with the number and aggravation of our offences against God? and yet “there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared;” yet “he is ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him.” Can a Christian, therefore, rise from his knees in malice, or retire in malevolence? Hence, said the apostle, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.” The other is in *giving*. Therefore, says the Saviour, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is

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perfect." To be followers of God,—that is, to exercise impartial and benevolent conduct,—we must not say to the distressed, "Go in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled, while we give them not such things as are needful for them." That is not the way God deals with us. Does he not give us all things richly to enjoy? Are not his mercies new every morning, and are we not daily loaded with his benefits? He spared not even his own Son, but gave him up for us all. "Will he not, therefore, with him freely give us all things?" "As we have opportunity, therefore, we are to do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith."

Oct. 6.—*The greatest of these is charity.* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

THIS will appear in five respects:—First, as we have already remarked in the previous meditation, *From the testimony of Scripture*. Secondly, *Greatest in its divine resemblance*. We do not resemble God by faith, or by hope, but we may resemble him by love, for "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him;" "and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Therefore, says the apostle, "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Thirdly, *Greatest in its disinterested nature*. Faith and hope are both beneficial, but the advantage turns upon believers. They "believe to the saving of the soul,"—that is, their own soul; and they are "filled with all joy and peace in believing." But "charity seeketh not her own;" she teacheth every man to "look not on his own things, but also on the things of others:" if it begins at home it does not end there. It extends its concern to friends, and relations, and neighbours; to the church, to the nation, and to the world. It may have its peculiar regards, and in its exercises it may be limited to opportunities, means, and resources; but this principle is of universal aim and tendency; and wherever it finds a human being it finds a brother, whatever his country, complexion, or condition may be. And while there are any "sitting in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death," its prayer will be, "Oh, send out thy light and thy truth, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health

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among all nations.” Fourthly, *Greatest in the eminence it produces*. Paul enjoins the Philippians to think not only on whatsoever things are honest, and just, and pure, but also on whatsoever things are lovely and of good report; and he says to the Romans, “He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.” Fifthly, *Greatest in its duration*. “Charity never faileth;” faith and hope fail. Faith and hope, like tutors and governors, attend us while we are under age, but leave us when we enter upon our heavenly inheritance. They are like the scaffolding necessary to the erection of the building, which, when it is completed, is laid aside, while the fair mansion stands the wonder of all beholders; or they are like to a vessel which conveys Christians to the other side of the river and lands them safely there, and then it is wanted no longer, for they do not wish to go back again now that they have reached the better country. But they have reached that rest now. If any thing could make them willing to enter the vessel to return again, it would be the sanctuary in which they have so often seen his power and glory; but they are now in his temple above. They have now joined the spirits of just men made perfect. Now their faith is turned into sight, and hope into enjoyment; while love will not only continue but increase; every hinderance to it will then be removed, and it will then be made perfect, while there will be fresh excitements to draw it forth to God forever.

Oct. 7.—*According to Ms mercy he, saved us.* Titus iii. 5.

WE are here reminded of the source of our salvation. In common things we observe a distinction between mercy and grace. Mercy is exercised towards the miserable. Grace is favour bestowed upon the guilty and the undeserving. But in the Scriptures grace always includes mercy. When Pharaoh’s daughter saw the infant Moses in the ark of bulrushes, her compassion was excited towards him: this was pure mercy. When Joseph saw before him his brethren, who envied him, and hated him, and, in intention, murdered him, instead of punishing them he not only promised them supplies, but assured them of his forgiveness: this was pure grace. And how fully does this apply to ourselves! We were not only miserable but guilty, and not only guilty but undeserving, yea, ill and hell-deserving creatures. Therefore to

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this source the sacred writers attribute our recovery from the beginning to the end. Thus Peter says, "According to his abundant mercy he hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection from the dead;" and Paul here says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The whole design of our salvation originates in and is secured by the purpose and grace of God. The plan was formed and accomplished long before we had a being. His love was, therefore, "preventing and free." Thus, while it gives us abundant encouragement, it excludes boasting, and disposes the believer to exclaim, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be all the praise." Thus, in our approaches to God, we must come not as buyers, but as beggars, bringing nothing in our hands, but obtaining all we need of mercy and grace, for time and eternity, "without money and without price." Thus the Publican sought and found mercy. Thus it was with the Prodigal: when he came to himself, he said, I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father, I have some claim upon you as a child, and you should overlook my youthful follies. No; but he says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy child: make me as one of thy hired servants." And how is he received? When the father "saw him a great way off he ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him," and we find he was not only clothed but adorned, not only fed but feasted, and the whole family was filled with ecstasy, and the house with joy and gladness. Indeed, the whole design of revelation is to encourage the hope of the penitent. Thus, "what things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Oct. 8.—*A royal priesthood.* 1 Peter ii. 9.

THE kingly and the priestly offices among the Jews belonged to different tribes. Judah had the sceptre, Levi had the censer. These were not found united in the same person; therefore, when king Uzziah stretched forth his hand to seize the censer in the

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temple to burn incense, his arm withered away. Before the law, in the time of the patriarchs, Melohizedek was priest of the most high God: and he was also king of Salem, which is, being interpreted, king of peace; therefore the apostle makes him a greater type of the Messiah than Aaron. We read that Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; for he, as Zechariah expresses it, *is a priest upon his throne*; that is, he is both *King and Priest*. His followers are called upon to resemble him. We are told they are made “kings and priests unto God.” Here they reign and they minister; they reign as kings over their spiritual enemies, and they will be “more than conquerors through him that loved them;” and they will wear crowns of righteousness, which shall not fade away. Then they also are priests ministering in things pertaining to God. A priest must have an *altar*, “whereof,” says Paul, “they have no right to eat, who serve the tabernacle.” A priest must always have something to *offer*, and they “offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” What are these sacrifices? A broken heart and a contrite spirit; alms, odours of a sweet smell, prayers and praises. And we are to present our bodies, says the apostle, “as a living sacrifice unto God, which is our reasonable service.” In some communities the term priest is applied exclusively to ministers. But this has no countenance in the New Testament. These are names which apply to the laity as well as to ministers. All who are the partakers of divine grace are there considered as sacred characters. They are A royal priesthood.

Oct. 9.—*He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them, on the Sabbath-days. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.* Luke iv. 31, 32.

OBSERVE the *place*,—Capernaum. Capernaum shared much of the Saviour’s presence, for he was there nearly two years of his public ministry,—a longer period than he resided in any other place. Though it is here called a city, it was a poor insignificant fishing-town. Yet our Saviour says, “Thou art exalted unto heaven.” Why? How? Because he dignified the place by his presence, by his miracles, and by his teaching. But what says the Saviour in another place? “And thou, Capernaum, who art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the

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mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." The reason is, because answerable to our privileges are our responsibilities; because the greater our means and advantages the greater our sin if we neglect them; and the greater our sin the greater our condemnation. Let us notice, secondly, the *season*,—"The Sabbath-day." Not that he forbore on other days: his lips always dropped like the honeycomb; and whether he was in a private house, or on the road, or by the seaside, or upon the mountain, we find his lips preserving and conveying knowledge. Yet he always paid a particular regard to the Sabbath, and he would lead us to do so by his example: he would lead us to do the same also by his command; and he does this, above all, by the influences of his Spirit. Dr. Haweis has observed, in his Church History, that there never was a revival of religion in any age or country which was not characterized by two things,—a peculiar fondness for psalmody, and a peculiar regard for the Sabbath-day. Thirdly, We may consider the *teaching*. "We are not told what he taught, but we have a specimen of his teaching a few days before, when he was in Nazareth and in the synagogue, when he said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." He had the "words of eternal life;" and, his enemies being his judges, "never man spake like this man." And lastly, We may observe the *impression produced*. "They were, all astonished at his doctrine." One of the first emotions which is ever produced by his word, when it enters the mind, is astonishment. Every thing seems wonderful. The things in themselves are not new, but our perception of them and our experience are new. The sun had shone before, but the blind man never saw it till his eyes were opened, and therefore it was now to him. But here, alas! the astonishment was a mere temporary excitement, an idle wonder, passing off "like the morning cloud and early dew, which soon pass away." "His word was with power." Not the power of compulsion, dry official authority; not the power of paid eloquence, nor of mere reasoning and argumentation: no, but the power arising from influence, and this influence arising from his full knowledge, of the subject; from his felt acquaintance by the audience with the state of their

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hearts; from his “commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God;” from the motives which he adduced, throwing back the veil of futurity, showing them a world in flames, a descending Judge, and hell and heaven following; and the combination of dignity and simplicity, majesty and mildness, which he possessed. He was all feeling, and never failed to make others feel. His word is still accompanied with power. The apostle says to the Thessalonians, “Our word came to you, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” The gospel is his word, and the gospel is “the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.” What power is there in it to awaken, to comfort, to sanctify, and to preserve!

Oct. 10.—*In the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil.* Luke iv. 33.

LET us glance at the *subject* of this miracle. In the days of our Saviour, demons seem to have been allowed to seize and to possess the bodies of men in some extraordinary and inexplicable manner; to show, perhaps, more sensibly, his victories over the powers of darkness, which are invisible to us, and to prove “that for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The sort of spirit possessing is commonly designated from the state of the being possessed. You read of “a deaf and dumb devil;” that is, the *man* was deaf and dumb. Here he is called “an unclean devil.” All devils are unclean; they are all sinful. They are unclean in their natures, in their passions, in their actions, and in all their endeavours to make men unclean,—that is, to love sin, and to live in the practice of it. This man, though not perhaps old in years, was filled with the sins of his youth. His sin was now made his punishment. Satan had entered him corporeally as well as spiritually,—for he always possesses the soul of men. He that is governed by envy has the spirit of an envious devil; and he that is governed by malice has the spirit of a revengeful devil; and he who lives in chambering wantonness and sensuality has the spirit “of an unclean devil.” All sin is of a defiling nature; and while any sin rules in a man, this sin keeps up a connection with the enemy of his soul, and he is “led captive by the devil at his will.” There are some

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who deny diabolical agency, but thereby they prove it the more, for "he blinds the minds of those who believe not." And the apostle says, he is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Observe, Secondly, The *scene* of this miracle. The subject of this possession "of the spirit of an unclean devil" attended in the synagogue. This is no unusual thing. When "the sons of God" came to present themselves before the Lord, we read, in the book of Job, that "Satan came also, and presented himself among them." He is excluded from heaven indeed, but Adam and Eve found him in Paradise, and our Saviour found him in the wilderness. Where can we be now so as to be inaccessible to him? He is said to be in the world, for "the world lieth in the wicked one;" but let none imagine that they are inaccessible to him when they are alone. Ah! David found him when he was alone on the housetop. Wherever we are, therefore, we should remember the words of our Saviour, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." We may find him at the throne of grace, standing at our right hand to resist us; at the Lord's table, endeavouring to draw off our minds from the dying of the Lord Jesus; and we may find him in the house of God now, in our days. Satan has much to do in the synagogue,—much more than in many other places. In Macgowan's "Dialogue of Devils" there is this relation:—Two infernal spirits having met, one of them very warm and weary, the other cool and lively, after a little explanation it was found that he who was cool and lively had been to the play-house, where he had nothing to do; where they were all with him; where they were all of one mind, all doing his work. Whereas the other, who was warm and weary, said, "I have been at a place of worship, and I had much to do there: to make some sleep; to induce some to hear for others instead of themselves; to lead the thoughts of some, like the fool's eye, unto the ends of the earth; to pick up, as fast as I could, the seed which was sown in the heart; and to turn away the point of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, lest it should pierce even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Oct. 11.—*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.* Ps. ciii. 17.

THE truth of this declaration is apparent, if we consider that from the beginning to the end of time *mercy is attainable*. We have met with many, and have read of many, who have obtained mercy. Hence we read of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, of the murderers of our Saviour, of the Corinthian converts; and there are millions more who have obtained this mercy, whose names are not recorded in the Scriptures; and yet, notwithstanding all this, his mercy is undiminished. And what the Lord has done in showing mercy to thousands he is able and willing to do again. All who repair to him shall find mercy; and when all who are now the recipients of it have passed away, this mercy remains, and will remain, for their children's children, unto all future generations. Hence we read of the "sure mercies of David," and of the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," of an "everlasting righteousness," and of being "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," of "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace," and also frequently of "eternal life." And after justifying his people will he again condemn? No, says God; "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." After adopting them into his family, will he disinherit them? No, says God; "Thou art no more a servant, but a son, and, if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Nor, after displaying his mercy in delivering them from the bondage of corruption, will he suffer them to become a prey to sin and Satan; for, says the apostle to the Romans, "Sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace." "Being confident," says he, "of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Thus,—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,—
To save from sorrow and from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

In all the changes of life and the ever-varying condition of our frames, amidst the rebukes of Providence and the hidings of God's face, when the Christian is ready to say, "Is his mercy clean gone forever, and will he be favourable no more?" how

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cheering to know that “his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting,”—that it is and always will be in the purpose of his grace to save and bless us! Our relations may be removed by distance or death, and we may feel our own dissolution approaching; but of this we may be assured,—that, “when heart and flesh shall fail, he will be the strength of our heart, and our portion forever.”

Oct. 12.—*Why then is all this befallen us?* Judges vi. 13.

PERHAPS there is hardly a truth that we hold, however firmly, but something far below ingenuity may embarrass by questions which wisdom itself may not be able to answer. And what wonder if this should be the case with regard to an infinite Being, who in none of his works, and by none of his creatures, can be found out unto perfection? Thus some have said, if “God is love,” how comes he to leave so much misery in the world, which he could hinder? Now, we admit the difficulty is great, very great; and there will be many things which we shall be unable to harmonize with the assertion of the Apostle John, —“God is love.” This difficulty, however, no more belongs to Christians than to other men. All meet with it, all feel it; and as to a deist, he must feel it peculiarly. He believes in a God; but he believes that God is pure, omnipotent, and benevolent, therefore he denies a future state of misery. But he cannot disprove a present state of misery. He therefore only shifts the difficulty instead of removing it. Any misery in God’s empire, since he could have prevented it, is inconsistent with the deist’s notion of a Deity. And yet he goes on reproaching Christianity with what no more belongs to Christianity than to deism. Suppose Christianity had never appeared: suppose it was now destroyed: why, the case would remain the very same; misery would remain, disease would remain, and the sufferings of children too, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, would remain. God has much to explain hereafter. There is much in his government which seems to be at variance with the doctrine that “God is love;” but that does not prove the doctrine false. All this is in *appearance*, and because we have not those views which God has, and which we shall have hereafter. Oh, let us distrust ourselves, and not dishonour God. “If the tree is known by its fruit,” let us remember that there

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are cases in which the fruit must be judged by the tree. For instance, now, if we knew a person who has been remarkable for wisdom and goodness, and has never done any thing incompatible with these all through life, we repose a kind of implicit trust in him; and should any thing be alleged against his character, what do we? Why, we give him credit till he has an opportunity to explain himself, and we deem it very disingenuous to judge of the whole by a part, and we would rather judge of a part by the whole. Let us do the same with regard to the blessed God, and let us remember not only that our present faculties, are very limited, and that only small portions of the divine proceedings ever come under our observation, and that we are ignorant of the bearing of these upon others, and also of their issues with regard to the whole, but let us also remember that it is a part of our moral discipline to walk here by faith and not by sight. Let us remember, too, that we are now in a course of training; and if we are in training for a future and an invisible state, the principle of that training must be, and can only be, *trust*. We may be assured that all God permits is good and necessary upon the whole. Men will hereafter be made perfectly sensible that they have been the authors of their own misery.

Oct. 13.—*God is love.* 1 John iv. 8.

WHEN John says, "God is love," he means to intimate not only that love is God's *attribute*, but that it is God's *character*. Indeed, we cannot apply the word character to God precisely as we do to men. Among men, character is always the consequence of habit, as habit is frequently the result of previous disposition; and always the result of repeated action. But when we say that love is God's character, we mean that he is peculiarly distinguished by it, and that all his perfections are, so to speak, so many parts and modifications of love. His wisdom is his love devising and arranging; his power is his love executing; his truth is his love fulfilling; his holiness is his love forbidding whatever would be injurious to us; his anger is his love chastening us for our faults and reducing us to reformation and repentance; and even his threatenings are the expressions of his love to us, as they are our guard and our warning, and are designed to prevent the very evils they denounce. God has written two

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huge volumes upon this subject: it would take up years and ages to read them through properly; all we can do, therefore, is to quote a chapter or a verse or two from each of them. The first of these volumes is *Creation*. Creation is immense; but we fix upon our own world. "The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," and it is filled with his riches. "The day is his, and the night also is his;" he "makes the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice." He has "appointed the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down." He has made "summer and winter." And all these seasons succeed each other in a regular order, and are prepared gradually to melt into each other without any disruption, and all of them bringing forward their appropriate advantages and pleasures, so that "the year is crowned with his goodness." Then, as Cowper says, look at "the sweet interchange of hill and vale, and wood and lawn, and land and water." Then we may observe how obvious it is that God intended not only to provide for our wants, but our gratifications; not only for our support, but our delight. Eating and drinking are essential to our support; but our God might have rendered our food and beverage as nauseous as medicines. He has rendered them agreeable, so that in partaking of them we never think of necessity, but only of gratification. Why the perfume and the breath of the rose and the lily? "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these:" it can only be designed for indulgence. The apple-tree yields a fruit important to man, but God could have caused it to yield this fruit without the previous process of blossoming: this was intended to charm us before he enriched us. But we must just glance at the other volume,—the *volume of Revelation*, which is much larger and nobler than the first. God has "magnified his word above all his name!" "Behold," says God, "I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

"God, in the person of his Son,
Hath all his mightiest works outdone,"

sings our good Dr. Watts; and the apostle says that "God hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." And our Saviour himself said, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-

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begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." But general reflections impress little compared with facts and incidents. The one is like surveying a prospect from a high hill; the other is like descending into the vale and examining all the contents of the particular scenes and objects. The Apostle John, having asserted "that God is love," immediately mentions an instance,—a peculiar instance, from which the very angels fetch their fairest and fullest proof of the doctrine; for, said he, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Oct. 14.—*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

1 John iv. 10.

LET us turn aside and behold, First, the *grandeur and dear-ness of the gift*. It was not an angel, but the Lord of angels; not a servant, but a Son,—his own Son, his only-begotten Son, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." This gift insures and includes every other; "for he that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Behold, Secondly, The *condition into which he entered*. It was not the angelic state: this would have been a mighty condescension; but he descended still lower; "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" "the Word was made flesh." Though man, absolutely considered, is nothing, yet he is otherwise comparatively and relatively viewed. But our Saviour never appeared in any of the superior forms of our nature. He lived a life of penury, and reproach, and persecution. Peter had a house of his own; John had a house; and "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." There are few who are destitute of all sympathy and compassion; but, says he, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comfort, but I found none." There are none who are strangers to sorrow of some kind; and he was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But who can describe or imagine his inward sufferings when he was in the garden and was "sore amazed and very heavy"? when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrow-

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ful, even unto death"? when "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"? when he exclaimed on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet "it pleased the Father to bruise him," and for our sakes, and for our recovery. We notice, Thirdly, *The unworthiness of the persons for whom he was sent thus to suffer and to die.* Paul has been beforehand with us here:—"When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly; God commendeth his love towards us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," Fourthly, Let us contemplate *the beneficial consequences of the dispensation.* "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And "God," says our Saviour, "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let us notice, finally, *The number of the partakers.* It is a "multitude which no man can number," compared in the Scriptures, sometimes to the drops of morning dew, sometimes to the stars of heaven, and sometimes to the sand of the sea-shore. Half mankind die in a state of infancy; and surely, if "of such is the kingdom of heaven," here is half the human race mercifully disposed of at once. And as to the other half, how many would appear if we knew all! for the Lord has his "hidden ones." How many have been saved already since the foundation of the world! How many are the subjects of divine grace now passing through this vale of tears! And oh, when we look forward to better times,—when "a nation shall be born in a day," when "he shall sprinkle many nations," when "all nations shall fall down before him, and all kings shall serve him," "and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God."

Oct. 15.—*Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.* Ps. cxxxvi. 1.

LET us notice the *repetition of the leading sentiment of this psalm*:—"For his mercy endureth forever." Here is not only information, but a remembrance, which we should reduce to practice. This repetition seems often very necessary; we are so very apt to be forgetful and negligent. Hence our Lord instituted the Supper, and said to his disciples, "This do in remembrance of

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me.” “Wherefore,” says Peter, “I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.” And again, he says, this “second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” The burden of this beautiful psalm is calling to remembrance the mercies of the Lord. No less than twenty-six times is this sentiment repeated. The sacred writers rejoiced in this subject; and how desirable it is that we should always keep it in mind! Let us observe the *thanksgiving which it demands*:—“Oh, give thanks unto the Lord.” Religion is a personal thing. So, when David, in another psalm, calls upon others to bless the Lord, he concludes with saying, “Bless the Lord, O *my* soul.” Alas! how little disposed are we to adopt his resolution, “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth!” It is said of Hezekiah, (and it was a sad blemish in his character,) that he “rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up.” “How lamentable,” says Dr. South, “is it that a world so full of God’s creatures should be so empty of his praise!” David heaves a sigh five times, and says, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” But our thanksgiving, in order to be accepted, must proceed from the affections of the heart. David therefore said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is *within* me, bless his holy name.” “What is it that best praises a teacher but the proficiency of his pupil? What is the best commendation of a tree but the goodness and plentousness of its fruit? And “herein,” says our Saviour, “is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Zacharias, the father of “the Baptist,” tells us that this is the grand design of God in redemption,—“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.”

Oct. 16.—*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*
2 Tim. iii. 16.

“HOLY men of God,” says Peter, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” And, says Dr. Watts,—

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“The prophets’ pens succeed their breath,
To save the holy words from death.”

We are here reminded of the origin of the Scriptures,—with the committing of the mind and will of God to writing. This is important for two purposes. First, *because the knowledge of them must be preserved and extended*. Without the knowledge of them they cannot be felt; they cannot be acted upon; they can neither become the rule of our conduct nor the source of our consolation. Therefore says the apostle, “How can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?” Therefore says God, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” Therefore says the church, “That thy way may be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations.” And, Secondly, *because there was no way of preserving and extending this knowledge to be compared to this*. Thus, both with regard to extensiveness and security, Scripture surpasses oral tradition. We all know, in the common affairs of the world, how a thing is altered by repeated relation. There are some persons who never regard accuracy at all; others seem incapable of it,—some from lack of memory, others from fervency of feeling and circumstances; and it is well known how a single term will express too much or too little to define properly the true meaning of a case. It is proverbially said there is no believing one-half of what we hear. What should we have known of the history of our own country without written documents? A number of facts might have reached us orally, but then they would have been altered in the lapse of years; and therefore the earliest part in the history of every nation, previous to the acquisition of written records, is always deemed fabulous. And what was derived from this source when it was unrecorded became more and more indistinct and corrupt. This was natural and unavoidable; hut in the family of Abraham, and in the nations of the Jews, it was otherwise. There revelation was, after a while, committed to writing. Thus it became fixed and certain. Thus appeals could be made to it, and mistakes could be corrected by it. The original copy was kept in the ark of the Lord. Every king of the Jews, when he came to his throne, was commanded to transcribe it for his own use. At every public festival it was brought forth and read in the audience of the people. This would keep up an acquaintance with it. The pious would of course soon multiply copies, and they would lend and read these transcriptions

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to their relations, neighbours, and friends. The highest honour, therefore, that can attach to writing is, that by means of it the words of eternal life have come down to us unimpaired. And, as Dr. Watts says,—

“The bright inheritance of heaven
Is by the sweet conveyance given.”

Oct. 17.—*The word of the Lord endureth forever.* 1 Pet. i. 25.

WE may, therefore, be persuaded of the stability of the cause of revelation. We may give to the winds our fears: they are unworthy of us, as they are entirely groundless. The church of Christ is not, cannot be, in danger. “Upon this rock,” says he, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The unbelief of man shall not make the word of God, says the apostle, of none effect. Men may oppose Christianity, they may burn the Bible, but they cannot destroy either the church or the Scriptures. “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” says the Saviour, “but my word shall not pass away.” “My word,” says God, “shall not return unto me void; it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Thus we read in the Acts that “the word of the Lord grew and multiplied.” The waves may roar and dash, but while they beat against a rock they break only themselves. Satan, in our day, may be deceiving many; but yet we have, in thousands of cases, abundant proof that God is at work too. Has he not all his enemies under his control and under his subserviency? Oh, yes! the thunders that terrify will purify the air. God shows his government of the world in those confusions which seem likely to unhinge every thing; and he shows his care of the church in those perils and difficulties which seem likely to destroy it. Let us therefore apply the Scriptures to our own use, and to the purposes for which they have been given:—“Whatever was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope.” “These things,” says the evangelist, “are written that ye may believe on the Son of God, and that, believing, ye may have life through his name.” We are only trifling with the Sacred Book, unless we make it the means of leading our feet into the way everlasting. For to what purpose is it that we read it unless we receive the “saying which is

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worthy of all acceptance,”—unless it brings us to the Saviour,—unless it enables us to give ourselves up to him as poor, perishing sinners, knowing in whom we have believed? Oh, let us then seek the blessings it promises, attend to the duties it enjoins, follow its examples, and suffer them to govern us in our worship, in our lives, and in our calling. And let us be concerned for the diffusion of scriptural knowledge at home and abroad. What can we impart to our fellow-creatures equal to the bread and water of eternal life? And let us, whenever we have opportunity, speak highly of the gospel, and recommend it to others.

Oct. 18.—*A peculiar people.* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

WITH regard to Israel of old, God said, “If ye will obey my voice and my word, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine.” God’s design was to keep this people distinct and separate from all others; therefore we read that when they mingled with other nations and learned their ways they were no longer a peculiar people in character, and consequently no longer a peculiar people in privilege. God destroyed the fences which distinguished his heritage from common ground, so that the garden of the Lord became a waste, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Now, all this can be easily applied to Christians. “What fellowship,” saith the apostle, “hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as he hath said: I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Our Saviour says to his disciples, and to all his followers, in addressing these, “Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” This was the grand design of his mission:—“He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” This peculiarity begins with him. “A new heart,” he says, “will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. They have another heart, and it is not the spirit of the world, but the spirit freely given to them of God.” This peculiarity will show itself out

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wardly in all proper ways. Not that this peculiarity requires us to differ from others in the common usages of life, or to abstain from the innocent customs which obtain in the neighbourhood wherein we live. Peculiarity for its own sake is worthless; and regarding it thus is the proof of a vain mind which longs for distinction, and of a weak one that is unable to obtain it unless by trifles and by tricks. If our peculiarity goes no further than the use of the pronoun *thou* instead of *you*, or the shape of our apparel, verily it is of little importance, and may conduce to pride rather than humility. But when we can disentangle ourselves from others at the call of truth, duty, rectitude, or usefulness, when we can advance without company or commendation, when we can go forward suffering for righteousness' sake and shine as lights in the world, this is above all praise! And in this way Christians are called upon to be a peculiar people. Let us never, therefore, say, if we do so and so we shall be singular. Why, the very things in which we are required to be peculiar are those very things in which people desire to be peculiar. Persons are not afraid of being peculiarly wise, peculiarly rich, peculiarly honourable, and peculiarly valued. There is no beauty, there are no riches or honours, there is no learning or wisdom, to be compared with those that are found in the ways of godliness. In their hopes and fears, their pains and pleasures, all Christians are peculiar. And though it may be surprising to some, yet we may also add, that Christians are peculiar in their failings and infirmities, for their spot is the "spot of God's children."

Oct. 19.—*And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and Ms mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.* 1 Chron. iv. 9.

THE chapter of which these words form a part, and the former and following chapters, are full of genealogies. They seem to be the least interesting and profitable of all the parts of the Sacred Scriptures. Yet they are not without their use, especially as they ascertain the descent of the Messiah from the tribe of Judah and the house of David. But this passage breaks in upon us as a fine, well-watered, green, pleasant spot suddenly bursts in upon the sight of the traveller in a barren wilderness or a sandy desert.

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Let us observe what is said concerning Jabez. First, With regard to *his name*. This was given him by his mother, who called him Jabez, which signifies *sorrowful*, “because,” says she, “I bare him with sorrow.” Among the Jews names were generally appellatives; and they were often given to signify and perpetuate particular events, with which the imposers were affected at the time. For instance, Joseph had two sons born before the years of famine; and Joseph called the name of the first-born *Manasseh*:—“For God,” said he, “hath made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house; and the name of the second called he *Ephraim*, signifying fruitful.” So we find with Moses: he had two sons; the name of the one was Gershom,—that is, a stranger, for he said, “I have been an alien in a strange land;” and the name of the other was Eliezer:—“For the God of my fathers,” said he, “was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.” And with regard to the name given to Jabez by his mother, perhaps she bore him in a very ill state of health; perhaps under great depression of spirits, and full of forebodings; perhaps she brought him forth in peculiar pain and sorrow; perhaps the expression refers to her external condition; perhaps (and this is exceedingly probable) her husband died while she was bearing, and thus it was her lot to bring forth a babe destined never to see a father’s smile. What an affliction would this be! But there are various other afflictions to which mortals are born “as the sparks fly upward,” and every heart knows its own bitterness. We may be assured that it was not without reason that she called the child Jabez, saying, “I bare him with sorrow.” Secondly, *His honour*:—“And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren.” The commendation is comparative. This may imply that his brethren also were honourable, though in a less degree. If it were said of *some* persons that they were “more honourable than their brethren,” it would not be saying much in their favour; but the language here is obviously designed to dignify Jabez. We are not told from whence the honourableness of Jabez arose,—whether he had signalized himself in war, or distinguished himself by his talents and learning, or whether he had been a magistrate or a ruler. “Them that honour me,” says God, “I will honour,” and this should also be our rule of judgment: we should estimate men, not according to their adventitious appendages, but according to their

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real worth; and their real worth is their moral and religious character. And we have reason, therefore, to believe that the honourableness of Jabez arose from his piety, especially when we consider the testimony that is added. Let us also observe the connection between the two former particulars. His mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bare him with sorrow;" hut "he was more honourable than his brethren." Did she live to see this? If she did, she learned from it, and we may learn from it too, that, as our comforts often prove our crosses, our afflictions often prove our blessings; and where is the Christian who has not found "the valley of Achor a door of hope"?

Oct. 20.—*And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil.* 1 Chron. iv. 10.

FIRST, Observe the God to whom he prayed. He addressed himself to the one living and true God, and who is called "the God of Israel," first, because he had appeared to Jacob and given him the name of Israel, saying, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed;" secondly, because he had entered into covenant to be the God of the nation that should descend from his loins; and, thirdly, because he is now what he has always been,—a Being peculiarly concerned for the good of those who are "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." We address the same God as Jabez did. What a thought is this! He is no older now than then:—"He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Oh, what a pleasure is there in addressing the God of Israel as a known God, as a tried God, the God of our fathers, the God of our households, a faithful God who has always been "a very present help in time of trouble"! Observe, Secondly, His prayer. Was this prayer at his setting out in life, or was it offered on any particular occasion? Or was it a prayer, the substance of which he had often made use of? However this may be, he was a man of prayer, and his prayer here recorded would never have been found in the hook of God, unless it had been offered "in spirit and in truth." Let us notice the subject-matter of it; it is first expressed *generally*:—"Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed!"

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By this we may understand God "blessing him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." There is a reality, an excellency, and a satisfaction in these; they pertain to the soul and to eternity; they can accompany us through the valley of the shadow of death, and stand by us when we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. We must be concerned to add to the blessings of nature and providence the blessings of divine grace. As to temporal blessings, a man taught of God considers himself blessed indeed with regard to these, when God gives him a heart to enjoy them and to improve them, and when, along with them, comes the love of God. Secondly, It is also *particularly* expressed. Persons differ in their conditions and circumstances, and therefore they pray every man accordingly. There is very little, as to our greater wants, but may be comprehended under three articles. Let us notice them both as to their temporal and spiritual bearing. The first is, that "thou wouldest enlarge my coast." If Jabez lived after the division of the Holy Land, and had to fight with and drive out the Canaanites, that he might more and more realize and possess the portion that was assigned him, the prayer is very striking, and can be easily explained. It will equally apply to the worldly state of the good man now. He will not indeed be avaricious, but he may pray that God would send him a competent support; that he may be able to "provide things honest," not only in the sight of God, but also "in the sight of man;" that he maybe able to train up a growing family with credit, and that he may have wherewith to give to him that needeth; that he may "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called with all meekness." But where is the person who does not stand in need of spiritual enlargement? This "enlargement of coast" is the same which Paul enjoins on the Corinthians: "Be ye also enlarged," says he; that is, obtain a more religious state,—more hope, more peace, more joy in believing. The second article regards the *divine assistance*:—"And that thine hand might be with me." This, as a prayer for success in all his enterprises, will apply still more to a Christian. How much has he to do in his spiritual vocation! To be active in serving his generation, and in private and public devotion to serve his God acceptably. But he feels his need every moment of the hand of God to be with him, "working in him to will and to do of his good pleasure." The third regards *suffering*:—

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“And that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.” A suffering state is in itself a state of temptation, and a good man will pray, “Keep me from temptation, that it may not grieve me,” (the evil of suffering:) how much more may he pray with regard to the evil of sin, that it may not grieve him! Indeed, there is nothing that ever can or will grieve the child of God like this; and yet he well knows that he is liable to it, and altogether unable to keep himself; and therefore he prays, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

Oct. 21.—*And God granted him that which he requested.*

1 Chron. iv. 10.

WITH regard to the prayer of Jabez, we observe, the Lord not only answered his supplication, but he answered it in the very thing he asked. This is not always the case. God sometimes answers prayer in the way of *equivalent*. When our Saviour said to Peter, “There is no man that hath left house, or parent, or brother, or child, or wife, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present life,” he did not mean manifold more houses, parents, brethren, or children; no, but more in *value*, more in quality, “and, in the world to come, life everlasting.” Sometimes God answers prayer by way of *exchange*, as we see in the case of Paul: when he sought that the “thorn in his flesh” might be removed, his prayer was answered; but how? The Lord said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Sometimes he indulges his people in *the very thing they implore*. This was the case with Hannah, when she came to the temple and addressed Eli:—“For this child have I prayed to the Lord.” So it was here with Jabez: “God granted him that which he desired,”—that is, in the enlargement of his coast, assistance in the performance of every duty, and preservation from evil, that it might not grieve him. The blessings which come in answer to prayer always wear the best, and always relish the sweetest. This may be considered *the testimony of Jabez himself* with regard to the blessings he had received in answer to prayer. Jabez not only prayed, but observed whether his prayers were answered; and when he had observed the answer he made it known, in order to excite others, and to glorify God. So did

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David: "I love the Lord," said he, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplication, because he hath inclined his ear unto me; therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." But this may also be considered as the testimony of *God himself* concerning Jabez. It is not always easy for us to determine when our prayers are answered, and sometimes it is nearly impossible. But God always knows. He can answer prayer without having gone out of the common course of nature and providence. He can answer prayer without miracle and without wonder. He can see the prayer answered, though the poor petitioner has said, "Thou hast shut out my prayer." He can see prayer answered, when it is accomplished through "terrible things in righteousness." Let this, therefore, prove an incentive to prayer, and to watching thereunto for answers to our prayers. God has expressly declared that "For all these things I will be inquired of to do it for you." And prayer is as sure as it is necessary. Have we not boldness and access with confidence by the faith of our Mediator? Is not God's very name a God hearing prayer? Did he ever say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain"? Has he not promised to pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication? and he prescribes the very petitions we are to present when we go to him:—"Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." If we read through the Bible, we shall find that from the beginning to the end it is a history of the value and success of prayer; and then we have the command and promise of the Saviour, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for he that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Oct. 22.—*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.*

Ps. lxxvi. 10.

THIS is, indeed, far from being the natural design and tendency of it. In this sense, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." But his wisdom and power are infinite;

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and by his overruling providence he causes the expression of human rage to conduce to the display of his own glory, and thus turns the curse into a blessing. The Bible abounds with instances of this, and a very striking exemplification will be found in the case of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Jeremiah was commanded to write on a roll all the words which had been denounced against Israel and Judah. This he did by means of Baruch, who not only transcribed the roll, but read it in the court of the temple of the Lord, the people standing underneath. Michaiah heard him, and related the substance to the princes, who were assembled in the scribes' chamber, in the house of the king. The king immediately ordered Jehudi to go and fetch the roll. "Now, the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month; and there was a fire on the hearth, burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was burning on the hearth." Vain rage! would this hinder the execution of the threatenings? Nay; it could not prevent the infliction of them. Jeremiah is ordered to take another roll:—"After that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah had burned." Nor was this all: the roll, instead of being eventually destroyed or injured, was even enlarged and improved. But since the days of Jehoiakim there have been, and there are to be found, persons who would destroy the Scriptures. We seem to shudder at the very proposal; we wonder that any person should be capable of such an action as this wicked king, who cut to pieces the divine roll and threw it into the fire. About one hundred and seventy years before Christ, Antiochus caused all the copies of the Jewish Scriptures he could find to be burnt; and three hundred and three years after, Dioclesian, the Roman emperor, by an edict, ordered all the Scriptures to be committed to the flames; and Eusebius, the historian, tells us he saw large heaps of them burning in the market-place. We have heard of Voltaire and Paine, and other lampooners and revilers of the Bible, who have, by their deeds, more than betrayed the wishes of their hearts; and every wicked man, though restrained from burning the Bible, may be considered as an enemy to it. Men make the Book their

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enemy, and then they become its enemies, and hate it, because it does not prophesy good of them, but evil. As Carlile, the infidel, said to Mr. Wilberforce, "I'll bear nothing from that book. How can you suppose that I can bear that book? For, if that book be true, I am a miserable man."

Oct. 23.—*The Lord is a God of judgment.* Isa. xxx. 18.

THERE are some who deny the moral attributes of Jehovah, and there are some who deny his punitive justice. By punitive justice we mean nothing of vindictiveness or revenge, but simply the love of rectitude, a determination to maintain law, and a resolution to punish crimes. There can be no government without laws, and laws are nothing without sanctions; and if laws be good in themselves they must be good in their execution. Crimes, therefore, are always punished in every properly-regulated state. We should not be able either to esteem or love God, if we supposed him destitute of it; if we suppose that, in his disposition and conduct, he would make no difference between truth and falsehood, between cruelty and kindness, between a Nero and a Howard: it is impossible that we could esteem or love such a being. He is the Supreme Governor of the world. Suppose we were to take before a magistrate the incendiary of our property or the murderer of our children, and he should turn away and say, "This does not concern me: I do nothing that is cruel." Cruel! cruel! Why, it would be his kindness to the criminal that would be cruel, both to him and to the community. Why, the magistrate is only the minister of God for good, when he does not bear the sword in vain,—when he is "a terror to evil-doers, as well as a praise to them who do well." Then there are others who practically deny this truth. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, their hearts are fully set," Solomon says, "to do evil." They are evil because God is good; because he is merciful they trifle with him, they continue to offend, yea, they lay hold of his numerous benefits, and pervert them into weapons of rebellion against their Benefactor. God is merciful, but he is only merciful through a Mediator. While, therefore, sinners neglect the Saviour, there is no more mercy for them than for a demon; they do not confess sin on the head of the appointed victim, and therefore the guilt of their sins rests upon

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their own head; their religion is no better than the worship of Cain, who brought God indeed an offering without a sacrifice, and God will not accept such offerings at their hand. God is merciful, but his mercy is not connivance at sin; God is merciful, but he cannot be merciful to a sinner unless he delivers him from his sins. He is merciful, but it is to the broken in heart and to the contrite in spirit. "If we confess our sins," says the apostle, "God is merciful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." With regard to others he will say, "Because they are people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour."

Oct. 24.—*He is long-suffering to usward, nor willing that any should perish) but that all should come to repentance.* 1 Pet. iii. 9.

MANY who do not deny the loving-kindness of God too frequently obscure and conceal it. They do not often, indeed, eclipse it totally, but partially. They do not lay a foundation for every man as a sinner: their scheme does not even allow them to use the language of Scripture itself. They make a distinction between God's secret and God's revealed will,—a distinction which, if men were to make and act upon in their worldly concerns, would be sure soon to obtain for them a disreputable character. What God says in his word we should take just as it is, and believe him to be sincere when we are assured that he is "long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But there are those who employ the thunder of Sinai more than they do the still small voice of Zion. Solomon says, "Strong wine must be given unto them that are ready to perish;" but there are some who so dilute spiritual things as to leave no strength in them; they so encumber the grace of God with their hard conditions and qualifications that there is scarcely a possibility of hope for many while they feel as they do. The reason they assign is, they are afraid of presumption in men. Why are they not also afraid of despair? Doubtless many more perish through despair than through presumption. Often, in secular affairs, many there are who need not have failed had they not desponded too soon; and in religious

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concerns, when the sinner feels that there is no hope he becomes desperate, and the desperation he feels links him to his unrenewed state, and he says, "There is no hope: therefore we will walk every man according to his own desires." Let us always remember that the Scripture nowhere justifies the despair of any man. As Dr. Watts has expressed it in' one of his hymns,—

"No mortal has a just pretence
To perish by despair."

But there are some who "refuse," as David says, "to be comforted:" and wherefore? "Oh," they say, "I am so unworthy! I am so guilty!" intimating that if they were not so had they could cherish a hope of being saved. This is at best a sort of self-righteous pride, operating under the show and pretext of humility; it must be destroyed, and all who are the subjects of it must be brought to submit themselves unto the righteousness which is of God,—must come to him as they are, naked, to be clothed, poor, to be enriched, guilty, to be justified. The language of the apostle, "To him that worketh not,"—that is, for this view and purpose,—"but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness." Let us remember that, if we do not deem ourselves too good, he does not deem us too bad, to be saved by him. All who now come and believe on his dear name, "though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Oct. 25.—*The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.* Prov. xiv. 10.

IN nothing are we more likely to be mistaken than as to the joys and sorrows of our fellow-creatures. Now, as to human sorrows, "the heart knoweth his own bitterness." We see persons whose cup runneth over, in the midst of abundance; yet they are the victims of uneasiness, and grief seems to feed upon their very vitals. And this may have been caused by some reproach under which they lie, and from which they cannot free themselves; or from some desire they cannot realize; or unrequited affection, or kindness which meets with no return. Some sufferers seem almost forbidden by their connections and conditions

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in life to make known the cause of their distress. Some are ashamed to make known the occasion of their griefs. Ahab falls sick, and takes to his bed: he is ashamed to own the reason, but it turns out that, although he is a king, he is pining for the piece of garden-ground belonging to Naboth. Hainan goes home and cannot eat, and, after enumerating all his possessions, says, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." In how many instances are the sufferings of our fellow-creatures imaginary, though they appear real enough to those who endure them. How much have Cowper, Howard, and others suffered! The "thorn in the flesh" may not be visible to us, because of the depth of its incision, but the pain it produces is not the less poignant: these are real sufferers, though the cause is not apparent to others. There are those who appear in company with a smile on their face, yet who retire to weep. Yes, these are real mourners. And let those who are the benefactors of our race remember this, and visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. But those who feel they cannot make known their sorrows to the dearest relation upon earth can retire and pour out their tears before God:—

"He'll hear them in the painful hour,
And help them bear the heavy load."

Then, again, with regard to human *joy*: how little do we know of this! When the eye is thrown Over society, one seems at a loss to conjecture what it is that delights some people. There are some persons who turn the Scriptures into ridicule, who wonder that their fellow-creatures can be happy in conditions and circumstances which would render them miserable. Thus it is that "miser" signifies a miserable man, and applies to one who possesses much, but who uses and enjoys nothing; and it is impossible for us to see what pleasure such a creature can feel in counting over his silver and gold, or what gratification he can take in his sordid hoardings. There is the joy of the luxurious man, and of the sensualist: with these may we never intermeddle, but become acquainted with that joy which is the glory of a man.

Oct. 26.—*The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.* Prov. xiv. 10.

LET us consider this *particularly with reference to Christians*; and we observe, First, That *religion has to do with the feelings*; it is not confined to forms and ceremonies. The sacred writers knew these things; they considered the passions as original parts of human nature, and these are to be employed in the service of God. They all have their proper place and work; for how can we love God or fear him without feeling, according to the language of one of our hymns,—

“True religion’s more than notion:
Something must be known and felt”?

Let us observe, Secondly, The *variety there is in the Christian’s experience*. We here see he is the subject of both sorrow and gladness. Thus the Christian’s present condition is of a mixed character, and alternating between clouds and sunshine. What is the emblem of the Christian’s state now? A bush burning with fire and not consumed; a vessel tossed with the winds and the waves. What is the motto of the Christian’s life. “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; cast down, but not destroyed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” We see in the Christian now the company of two armies,—nature and grace, flesh and spirit. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.” We see this exemplified in the representations of Scripture. The subjects of divine grace are spoken of as those who fear God, and who hope in his mercy; they are those who “return and come to Zion with singing, and with everlasting joy upon their heads.” And there are those who go forth with weeping, “bearing precious seed,” but who “shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.”

Oct. 27.—*A holy nation.* I Pet. ii. 9.

THE Lord’s people, though they consist of large numbers and their number is every day increasing, are not an undisciplined rabble. Observe their *nationality*. They are a multitude of

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people under rule and order, laws and a Governor. The worst government upon earth is a thousand times better than a mere mobocracy, where every one does that which is right in his own eyes. God's people are under authority. They are all subjects. They have a King who reigns over them, and a King who reigns in them too; who "puts his laws into their minds" and "writes them in their hearts;" he "makes them willing in the day of his power," and they then say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Secondly, They are a *holy* nation. Their holiness involves two things. First, Their separation from the world. Thus, under the law, the tabernacle and all the utensils thereof were called holy; not that they underwent a change, but because they were dedicated to the service of God,—*set apart* from common to special uses, from natural to spiritual uses. Thus we are told that "the Lord setteth apart him that is godly for himself," in his purposes first, then by his grace and providence. Then, Secondly, By the renovation of their natures. Thus they are holy, not only by dedication, but by *transformation*; to use the words of the apostle, being "transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." And this change is absolutely indispensable. If God were to call an angel before him, he could employ him immediately, without a change; he would be prepared and ready for his service. But if God called a poor sinner in this way, he must "work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure," and produce in him the principles and dispositions which will render his duty his delight, and enable him to say, after the example of his divine Lord, "My meat is to do the will of my Father which is in heaven, and to finish his work."

Oct. 28.—*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?* Ps. ii. 1.

WHAT has been the consequence of all the opposition against the cause of God and truth? What? Why, more abundant and zealous efforts in its diffusion; for inquiry is always friendly to truth, as darkness and concealment are friendly to error. And so also has it proved with regard to the sufferings of its followers by persecution. Here we have the testimony of an apostle who suffered as an evil-doer unto bonds, but he says, "The word of

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God is not bound." And says he to the Philippians, "I would ye should understand, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace." The periods of suffering have always been the most glorious for Christianity: the brethren have been united and endeared the more to each other; the spirit of glory and of God has rested upon them; their sufferings have arrested attention and induced sympathy; the witnesses of their sufferings have been found to be impressed, and they have been led to inquire concerning the principles that could produce such effects. Therefore the blood of the martyrs has always been considered the seed of the church, and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied and grew. Dr. Watts, all poet as he was, said, (and who would not wish to join with him in the choice?) "I would rather have been the author of *Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted*, than the writer of *Milton's Paradise Lost*;" but that was a prison-production. What did the enemies of religion get by confining Bunyan so many years in the jail at Bedford? There, almost inspired, he wrote those works which will continue to incommode the powers of darkness to the end of the world. The divisions and parties that have sprung up among professors have amazingly alarmed some good men; and in their lamentations they have added terror to grief; they have talked of danger, not remembering that in a thousand cases variety is compatible with unity. The differences which subsist among all those who hold the Head do not affect the oneness of the church. They are only so many branches which form one tree; so many members which form one body. By these they have always proved stimulatives to each other. They have awakened and increased emulation and zeal, and religion has always been, upon the whole, a gainer by them. It has been found far more important for Christians to love one another, and exclaim, "Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," than to peep together through the same keyhole of opinion. And then the different parts of Scripture have also, in consequence of these divisions, been peculiarly attended to. One party has argued for the doctrinal part, another for the practical, another the disciplinary; and, in consequence of these, no part has remained unemployed or unheeded. If we thus view these things, and if we consider their consequences as they

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affect Christianity itself, it is obvious that even these have been overruled for good; that even these, as they have given rise to parties and divisions, have caused each to have a salutary check upon the other; and that each has prevented the possibility of interpolation and alteration of the Scriptures. Thus the cause of true religion lives through all; and the very things which seemed likely to destroy or injure it have proved the means of its benefit.

Oct. 29.—*Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* 1 Peter ii. 9.

THE *state* referred to was one of great wickedness, wretchedness, weakness, and vice. This state is common to all mankind by nature. For, naturally, men are not found in different states, but in different degrees of the same state; *all* descended from the same source; and “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Not one. This, therefore, applies to the subjects of divine grace as well as others. “We were sometimes foolish and disobedient, walking in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;” and after this the kindness and love of God through Christ towards man appeared. They therefore often look (but not half often enough) “to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged.” For they are not left where they were found. “They were dead, but are alive again; they were lost, but are found;” they were afar off, but they are made nigh; they were once darkness, but are now made light in the Lord, for he hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. Observe the *medium* of their deliverance from this state. God himself called them. When men would execute their purposes they stand in need of instruments, and with all these, sometimes numerous and various, they fail in accomplishing their enterprise. But when God works, none can let or hinder. It is enough for God, in the production of his designs, to speak. It was so in the first creation: he only “spoke and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.” He said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He called things which were not, and they appeared. It is the same in the dispensation of his providence. He calls, it is said, for a sword, and it leaps out of its scabbard, and thousands arm themselves with instruments of destruction; he calls for a famine, and

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cleanness of teeth stalks throughout the land; he calls for a pestilence, and the cholera comes, and says, Whom shall I strike next? It is the same in all the operations of his grace. He therefore derives his character from this:—"Faithful is he who hath called you, who also will do it." This spirit cometh not from him who calleth you. Now, here our divines distinguish a twofold call. The one is common to all who are addressed by conscience, by afflictions, by reproofs, and by the examples of the wise and good, and by having opportunities to hear and to read the Scriptures of truth. But then there is another call, which they distinguish as internal and effectual. It is so because it is heard in the very conscience, and is obeyed from the heart; because now the end is answered:—they hear, and their souls live. When God says, "Seek ye my face," they answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." He calls on them to "forsake the foolish and live, and walk in the way of understanding," and they comply; he calls upon them to believe on the name of the only-begotten Son of God, and they are soon at his feet, crying, "Lord, save, or I perish;" he calls them to come out of darkness, and they obey.

Oct. 30,—*Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* 1 Peter ii. 9.

OBSERVE the consequences of this call. The light into which he called them is distinguished by two appellations. First, It is *divine*. "He calls them out of the darkness into his marvellous light." He is the Father of lights; all light is from him,—material light, mental light, spiritual light, the light of revelation, and the light of illumination. Therefore says the church, "In thy light shall we see light." Secondly, It is *wonderful*. He hath called us out of darkness into his "*marvellous light.*" It is marvellous in its greatness, in its clearness, in its influences, and in its effects. It sets a man a-wondering. If a person had been born in a mine, and had never seen any of the aspects of nature, and were to be raised up, and desired to look abroad, the first emotion, we may be assured, would be surprise and wonder. Thus it is really here. But here a question of some magnitude occurs:—To whom does this representation apply? All are willing to acknowledge its application to the heathen, for they

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were living in darkness, and perishing for lack of knowledge: when such are converted to Christ, doubtless they are called from darkness into marvellous light. There are also some who have scarcely any notion of divine things, though they live in the land of Bibles. Now, as to such, when these things are presented to their minds, they press upon them with all the force of entire novelty, and of them it may be said, they are called out of "darkness into God's marvellous light." But even with regard to those who have read and heard of these things, and have some loose speculative notions of them before, yet even these have been called "out of darkness into God's marvellous light," when they are called by divine grace. They have then other views. Other views of sin, of holiness, of the Saviour, of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. All these things have become new; not new in themselves, but new to them; not new in existence, but new in their experience. Thus the man whose eyes our Saviour had opened saw not a new sun, but the same sun that had ripened Isaac's corn and had been shining from the beginning; but it was new to him. Thus it is with these divine realities which he who has been enlightened beholds in their beauty and glory. And even after conversion they are called "out of darkness into his marvellous light." Thus they have fears, many fears, and he dispels them; they have doubts, and he removes them; they have perplexities, and he unravels them. Thus he fulfils the word, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, and in paths which they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." What will it be when he calls them out of the darkness of time into the marvellous light of eternity? A marvellous light, indeed, will that be! "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." Oh, how marvellous will the Saviour then appear unto them! Though they have read and heard of him so much, they will find that the one-half has not been told them, "when he comes to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe." There will be three things that will excite our wonder then. First, We shall miss some whom we expected to see. Secondly, We shall be surprised to find some there we despaired ever of seeing; this surprise, however, will not fill us

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with envy, but gratitude. Thirdly, We shall wonder to find ourselves there.

Oct. 31.—*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

Rom. i. 16.

So far from being ashamed of the gospel, we have every reason to admire it. Christianity is the only religion founded in love and requiring only love in return. As to other religions, they always want the assurance that "God is love." The heathen only derived their confidence from nature and providence: by observing these they did see something to encourage hope; but then they found other things to excite their fear, and in their guilty minds (for every man is conscious of some guilt) the fear hath more power to operate than the hope. And this will account for it, that in the history of all superstitions we find they have not only been absurd and foolish, but they have always been cruel and bloodthirsty. Our missionaries from abroad have always told us, among the heathen they have never found any thing like love, real love, or regard to their gods and goddesses. They only dreaded them, and therefore hated them; and this was an advantage in their conversion, that as soon as ever they could be assured of being protected from the resentment of their deities, they would trample them under their feet; they would throw them into the sea, or burn them in dressing their food. No, there is no religion of love but the religion of Christianity. We have reason not only to rejoice in the character but in the influence of Christianity too. This can never be fully appreciated. The Jewish kings were, in general, very bad men; still, however, they had a little more humanity than the surrounding despots. Therefore it was said by the Syrians that the kings of Israel were merciful kings; because they had revealed religion, and this had produced a degree of humanity and tenderness which others had not. So we see that when religion comes into countries, it operates according to the degree of the truth and spirit in which it is received. We might be ashamed if there were not much more Christianity in Protestantism than Popery: but now compare these religions together, as to the countries in which they have rule; see what a difference there is. Observe Scotland, and compare it with the state of Ireland. Observe the civil

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war after the French Revolution, when so many hundreds and thousands, as they fell into each others' hands, were immediately butchered; and then turn to the time of the civil war here in the time of Charles the First,—not an instance of a private ever being butchered on either side, during the whole war. So it was in the American war: nothing of this was ever practised; none of those who fell into each others' hand were treated with cruelty, or destroyed. Then, if we go to Spain, and see what they have done, and are doing there to this very hour, and see what a difference there is between Protestantism and Popery. Is it possible such a religion as the gospel of Christ should ever be received without doing much good? Christianity was not only the power of God unto the salvation of many, but, where it did not operate savingly, yet what advantages did it produce! How it tamed the fierceness of the passions and the savageness of the manners of the heathen! In proportion as persons have imbibed its spirit, and received the truth as it is in Jesus, they have always been distinguished by their humanity, benevolence, and exertions to do good. As Christians, therefore, we have reason highly to esteem the religion we profess, which comes to us with this proclamation, and with this aim:—"Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Nov. 1.—*And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known.*
Isa. xlii. 16.

WHAT could we do without such a Leader? The condition of men with regard to a future state is represented as being without God and without hope in the world. Man is a poor wanderer on the mountains of ignorance, a prey to every danger, liable to be led astray by his prejudices and passions, for "wherein is he to be accounted of?" He is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him," and if left to himself, he would, "in the greatness of his folly, go astray." A man may go to hell without a guide, but he cannot go to heaven without one, or without a Leader, of whose guidance we are here assured. But—blessed be his name!—if we earnestly seek divine direction, he is willing to listen to our supplications, and to take

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us under his own peculiar guidance. Hence the Christian can say, with David, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Thus the Church sung in triumph, of old, "This God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Oh, what can equal the satisfaction derivable from the persuasion that we are under divine guidance, led by One almighty to save, to pardon, to indulge; patient to bear and able to deliver; wise to conduct and to make all things work together for our good? Let us first observe that *the subjects of this guidance are blind loith regard to their spiritual stale*. Though all Christians are children of the light and of the day, yet "they were once wholly in darkness," and are still partially so; and were they not only in a measure enlightened, they would not stand in need of such a Director and Guide. Let us also observe *where he leads them*:—"I will lead them in paths they have not known." Now, this is true, first, with regard to their spiritual concerns. They were not born Christians, but they have been made such; and if now they differ from others, and from their former selves, it is because he hath "called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." "I will lead them in paths they have not known." What did they once know? They once felt convictions of sin, now they see its evil; they now not only feel an aversion with regard to it, but an abhorrence of it. What did they once know of faith and trust in the Redeemer? Now they can confide in him as their only foundation, and say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; yea, they can rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Then what did they once know of a throne of grace? They heard prayer and supplication, and perhaps they "said their prayers;" but they now know what it is to come unto God by Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." They have now boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Christ; their fellowship is now with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But they had not gone this way heretofore. Secondly, With regard to *their temporal concerns*, God leads his people in a way which they "have not known." What can we know of the future as to nations, families, or ourselves as individuals? Now, if we look back and contemplate the bounds of our habitation, our connections, our friends, our successes, our disappointments, as fixed by Providence, all appear surprising and rare. Perhaps, if much had

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been foretold us by a seer some years before, we should have been ready to say, "If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?"

Nov. 2.—*I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.* Isa. xlii. 16.

HERE we view God as our Interpreter. We may observe five instances in which the Lord makes darkness light before his people, and crooked things straight. First, As to *doctrine*. It is not for us to determine with how much error in judgment real grace may be found in the heart. We find our Saviour one day putting his fingers upon the eyes of a blind man, who afterwards said, "I see men as trees walking:" yet he was under the Saviour's own operation. And our Lord touched his eyes again, and commanded him to look up, when he saw all things plainly. For a time persons may have very confined and obscure, and sometimes very perplexing, views of some doctrines of the gospel, compared with what others know now and what they shall know by-and-by. God is gradual in all his operations, both in nature and grace. We see in nature things are slow in proportion to their value and importance. But though his mode may be sometimes slow, it is always sure, and under his agency. Secondly, As to *experience*. There are many things perplexing here. The temptations that often assail them are among the number; for they hoped to go on in their Christian course without annoyance. Then the Christian's life must be a warfare. So also with regard to *prayer*. They are often perplexed; they read that God answers prayer: "But," says the Christian, "he has not answered mine." But Christians should learn to distinguish. God immediately *hears* our prayers, but he does not always immediately answer. "For he is a God of judgment," and while his mercy constrains him to give, his wisdom leads him to withhold the blessing for a time; but he waits to be gracious. Sometimes by strange, sometimes by terrible, things in righteousness does he answer his people. It is the same also with regard to *joy*. Christians read in the Scriptures that religion is friendly to joy; that the redeemed shall come to Zion with songs, and with everlasting joy upon their heads. But many say, "I have so little of this." But do not we find that religion is described by sorrow as well as joy,—by fear as well as hope? Again, with

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regard to *assurance*. "Oh that I knew," says one, "my interest in that everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure!" Oh that he would say unto my soul, I am thy salvation! I could then face a frowning world and defy the king of terrors: but all is obscurity.

"Tis a point I long to know,—
Oft it causes anxious thought,—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"

The most that I am able to reach at present is peradventure, and to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Why, "wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart." Again, with regard to *practical duties*. With regard to a change of situation, a transition from one business to another, the Christian may be at a loss what step to take, and this will awaken in a pious mind a concern that others never feel; and it is natural he should feel this, because how much depends on every step he takes! And we know a wrong step may give a complexion to the whole of our future lives. We therefore feel a concern to know the way wherein we should walk, and our souls will be lifted up for divine guidance and direction. When Christians get to heaven, how will these words be realized in their blessed experience! then he will "make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight;" then they will have leisure to survey and capacity to understand the dealings of God, and all his conduct will appear faithfulness and truth; then the future will have been supplied, and all things explained; then they will see how all things advanced their welfare; though many had appeared dark, disorderly, and perplexing, yet all will harmonize, and they will exclaim, "Just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints."

Nov. 3.—*This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you: that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* 1 John i. 5.

LET us, in considering this message as addressed to ourselves, make two inquiries. First, *How was this message obtained?* John says, "We have heard it, and declare it unto you." Heard it from whom? Unquestionably from the Lord Jesus Christ,

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the faithful Witness, the great Teacher, sent from God. He delivered it to his disciples, and they delivered it to others. "No man," says he, "hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, he hath declared him." And in his intercessory prayer he says, "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." He had savingly opened to their minds his' character, relations, attributes, and designs, especially his purposes of mercy and grace, so that what they communicated was not invented, but reported. They delivered that which they also received. Some part of this message he delivered *personally*, while with them; but it would appear that he delivered much more after his resurrection than before; for which purpose he was with them forty days, speaking of the things which pertained to the kingdom of God. Still more did he communicate spiritually after his ascension, according to his promise:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come." Accordingly, we see what a difference there was afterwards in their views, and how their sentiments enlarged after the pouring down of the Holy Spirit. We may mark this with regard to one article. Take the death of the Lord Jesus. When our Saviour "showed unto his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief-priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day," Peter took him aside, and said, "Be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee," which drew upon him the severe reproof of the Saviour,— "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto ine; for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but those which be of men." But now, after he had received the communication of the Holy Spirit, now that Jesus is glorified, how does he view his death? Oh, it is the precious "blood of Christ, by which," says he, "we are redeemed." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." And again he says, "He once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Secondly, *What does the message express?* "Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" Yet we are not called to worship an

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unknown God. He never "left himself without witness, in that he has been continually doing us good, in sending us rain from heaven and filling our hearts with food and gladness." And all his works praise him, by wearing impressions of his perfections and subserving his designs. But what a difference between the discoveries of him in nature and grace! When a noted heathen philosopher was asked what God was, he required two days to give the answer, then four, doubling the time at every additional application to him, assigning as a reason, that the more he thought upon the question the less capable he was of replying to it. But now take John, one of the two called "unlearned and ignorant men" by the Jewish rulers: what says he? "God is light."

Nov. 4.—*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*
1 John i. 5.

LIGHT is perhaps the most perfect image of the Supreme Being. *Light illuminates*; it derives its name from its discoveries:—"That which makes manifest is light." Then may God well be called "light," for he it is who makes us "wise unto salvation." He it is who, by his Spirit, leads us into all truth, as it is written:—"But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Secondly, *Light rejoices the eyes*. "Light is sweet," says Solomon, "and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." David says, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Thirdly, *Light is pure*. Of all bodies light is the most pure. Other things are polluted. The air, the earth, and the water are all contaminated; but the rays of light are uncorrupted. Let the light shine upon a dunghill, or upon a dead body, or on any putrid mass, and it contracts no pollution from it. Well, therefore, may God be called light. "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." And, though his providence is universally exercised, infinite wisdom is combined with infinite holiness throughout the universe of God. Observe, also, that this message excludes all darkness; for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

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This shows the supremacy of God and his sovereign perfection, in distinction from all orders of his creatures. Christians are all “children of the light and of the day;” but we cannot say of any of them that in them “is no darkness at all.” Angels are proverbial for their wisdom and rectitude; but, says Elihu, “He charged his angels with folly.” There is none holy as the Lord; therefore says Job, “Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee?” Therefore says Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.”

Nov. 5.—*Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art,—the Holy One of God.* Luke iv. 34.

SOME have supposed that it was the design of the unclean spirit to interrupt and disturb the Saviour when he thus “cried out;” and, indeed, the wicked are continually saying, by their tempers and lives, “We desire not the knowledge of thy ways;” “We will not have this man to reign over us.” When conscience would accuse or upbraid them, they endeavour to stupefy it with an opiate or to curb it back with a gag. When God employs the rod, and would speak to them by it, they turn away their ears from hearing. When God’s ministers are faithful, then they are ready to “say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” When friends admonish, and entreat, how often do they say, “Pray, keep your religion to yourselves; be as religious as you choose; you go your way to heaven, and leave us to go ours. Why should you intermeddle with us?” We may always judge of the spirit of Satan in persons by their aversion to Christ and having any thing to do with him; and we may always judge of the Spirit of God being in us by our loving to approach him, and his approaching us, and having much continually to do with us. Then it expressed *fear*:—“Art thou come to destroy us?” Satan has now a degree of permission which he will not always possess. He is not yet judged, but “reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” His misery is nothing, therefore, to what it will be.

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“The devils,” says James, “believe and tremble:” they have faith enough to make them miserable. And this is the case with many of their followers. They have faith enough to make them very unhappy. They have the faith of assent, but not of consent; not of acquiescence, nor of dependence; not of application, never giving themselves to him. They believe and tremble; the first Christians believed and rejoiced. “Believing,” says Peter, “we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” David said, “My meditation of him shall be sweet;” “I will rejoice in the Lord.” The church said, “His name is as ointment poured forth;” it is most fragrant and delightful. It expressed *commendation*. “I know thee who thou art,—the Holy One of God.” Here, we see, Satan not only believed much, but talked well. How conversant is he with the Scriptures! How he quoted it in his address to our Saviour! Every thing he said was expressed in the language of inspiration. How he must have read the Bible! how attentive he must have been to it when it was preached! Yes; “Satan,” says the apostle, “can transform himself into an angel of light.” Heretics are all his mouth: they speak many good things, but these are only to sanction the bad ones, and thus render them the more mischievous. Truth is the substratum of all error; and every truth taken out of its place, or pushed too far, or improperly applied, becomes error. We cannot depend upon good talking, but we should always “love one another, not in word and in tongue, [the devil can do this,] but in deed and in truth.” Let us *look at the Author of this miracle*, and we shall see how the enemy of souls is under the dominion of the Lord Jesus; that, though an adversary, yet he is restrained and chained. He could not injure Job till he had obtained leave. Satan would never leave any of his subjects unless he was compelled to do it. The “strong man armed keepeth his palace and his goods in peace,” but a stronger than he cometh, and binds the strong man, and spoileth his goods. Therefore the Saviour rebukes him and expels him.

Nov. 6.—*And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and, come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.* Luke iv. 35.

JESUS was unwilling to receive praise from such lips. The praise of some is real censure. And, thus rebuked, the devil

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came forth, but not without showing his malignity on quitting his subject; for he threw him down before coming out of him: yet he injured him not. Now, this serves to explain Satan's agency with those who are under the influence of divine grace. He would injure those whom he cannot destroy. But even what he does against them will be overruled for good. Thus the "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet" the apostle, hid pride from him. The leech sucks for its own gratification, but the hand of the faculty directs him to the part of contact, and the relief of the patient is the consequence. So will it be with all Christians with regard to Satan's endeavours to destroy or injure them; but in all these they shall be "more than conquerors," and in a little time "he will bruise Satan under their feet." Then, as to the *spectators*: they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, "What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." Oh, if they had but improved as well as admired! if they had but given themselves up to him as their Portion to enjoy and as their Master to serve! But, alas, this was not the case. Let us beware that our religion consists in nothing less than a real surrender of heart to God, "presenting our bodies and our spirits a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

Nov. 7.—*These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.* Isa. xlii. 16.

THE people of God, as they themselves acknowledge, *deserve to be forsaken*, and they often say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." They may *think themselves forsaken*, and we have instances of this upon record: thus, Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee." So Asaph said, "Will the Lord cast off forever? will he be favourable no more?" So David acknowledges, "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless, thou heardest my supplications when I cried unto thee." But they *may* be forsaken. God himself speaks of this in his word; but let us

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observe *the period*:—"For a small moment have I forsaken thee." So it is in the apprehension of faith; so it always is very short compared with eternity. Then observe the *manner* of his forsaking them; for, however this may be explained, it must be consistent with his assurance of not forsaking them. Now, there are three ways in which God may forsake his people and yet the promise here made to the Jews remain substantially the same. First, In their *outward condition*, and he leaves them, saying, as he goes, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." Then he can reduce them in their circumstances, bereave them of their dearest relatives, remove their possessions and enjoyments, and leave them bare and destitute. But all this is compatible with his presence, for he has expressly said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." God is expressly and peculiarly with his people in trouble. Secondly, As to *enjoyment of spiritual comfort*. "Oh," said one of old, "when wilt thou comfort me?" But when these spiritual consolations are suspended, there are great searchings of heart, much that shows the Spirit of God to be with them; for these anxieties come not from nature. Thirdly, As to *the exercise of grace*,—not the existence thereof. Here we may refer to Hezekiah and Peter, though Peter's faith did fail as to its *exercise*, yet not as to its principle. Though weak in himself, the Christian, reposing on the arm of Omnipotence, "shall not faint, or, fainting, shall not die." "Yea, though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." What says the apostle to the Romans?—"I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, 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."

Nov. 8.—*If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* 1 John i. 6.

Now, persons may say this by profession of it to others, and they may say it to their own souls, persuading themselves that they are real Christians when they have no part or lot in the matter, their hearts not being right in the sight of God. The

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possibility of this self-delusion is admitted in the very addresses given to guard us against it. Thus, it is said, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. Let no man deceive himself." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls." Thus, it is said of Ephraim, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" And our Lord addressed a whole church of these deceived ones:—"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art poor, and blind, and naked." So there are thousands in our day who hear the word of God, but do it not; who have the form of godliness, but deny its power; who have a name to live, and are dead. Now, the falsehood of such pretensions to godliness, unaccompanied with a holy walk, is here denounced by the apostle in his usual way. So our Saviour says to the church in Smyrna, "I know thy works, and tribulations, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the *blasphemy* of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." He calls it blasphemy, you see. Congeniality must precede friendship; resemblance must precede fellowship; for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" And therefore it will follow that a change of heart is necessary before we can enter into the kingdom of heaven; for without this change we can neither enjoy God nor serve him acceptably; therefore saith the Saviour, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." How long this delusion may continue it is impossible to determine. Sometimes the snare has been discerned in due time, and it is a mercy to be enabled to escape from it. In other cases the delusion is kept up, being cherished by the father of lies, till death; but it can continue no longer. According to our Saviour, this confidence may be entertained by the man until he has reached the very door of heaven. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house has risen up and has shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he from within shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are!" Not know us! Why, "we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I know ye not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There

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shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves shut out." How awful will this be! and how awful the discovery then! It would be bad enough to go to hell from heathen countries; but how awful it will be to go thither from the gospel and the sanctuary of God, from his ordinances and his table! Yet Solomon says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Nov. 9.—*We have fellowship one with another.* 1 John i. 7.

THERE is a fellowship belonging to all the people of God. Wherever they live, they are all "fellow-heirs of the grace of life;" they are all "partakers of the heavenly calling;" they are all in the same bond of the gospel; they are all interested in the common salvation, redeemed by the same blood, justified by the same grace, sanctified by the same Spirit, kept by the same mighty power of God, and destined to the same everlasting kingdom. Therefore, whatever distinctions may prevail among them, they are all one in Christ Jesus. But this is not the fellowship referred to here. There is a fellowship existing between God and his people, and this is what John means here; there is a mutual participation,—a mutual intercourse; they "have fellowship one with another," so that "in all their afflictions he is afflicted." They feel pain when his name is dishonoured, and they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly; he rejoices over them, and they rejoice in him; he ennobles them, and they love to honour him; he is their God, and they are his people, and all that is his is theirs. It is by this that we are to judge of them, and not by their adventitious and external circumstances. The world often despises them, and they think very little of themselves also; but God prizes them. Could we have seen the tabernacle in the wilderness, we should not have seen it externally very splendid; no, it was covered with goats' skins, and the skins of badgers dyed red: but if we had entered-within, we should have seen there the tables of the law, the altar of incense, the mercy-seat, and the glory of God shining above it. So it is here. John says, "We have fellowship one with another;" "Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ."

Nov. 10.—*He that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16.

WE are here called to consider the condemnation of the unbelieving. *We* do not determine their doom: this has been decided by a Being who knows all things, and who will judge the world in righteousness. He here emphatically declares that “he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;” and under this impression the Apostle Paul has said, “How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Against which, as unreasonable, the infidel protests, and claims that the criminal be the judge of the law and the judge of the Judge. “Oh,” say some, “we are not accountable for our belief!” To which we answer, that if we are not accountable for our belief we are accountable for nothing, for all our actions spring from belief; and infidelity does not arise from want of evidence, but from want of inclination. We may judge of the moral disposition of a man from the nature of the things he opposes. In proportion as a man is holy, he is adverse to sin; in proportion as a man is sinful, he is adverse to every thing that is holy, and we know the Bible is distinguished by holiness. Its promises are holy, its commands are holy, it requires holiness of life and heart. Why do men dislike the Bible? Why do they love darkness rather than light, but because their deeds are evil? If the aim and design of the Scriptures be to “cleanse us from the filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord,” it is easy to determine why a man opposes this. He who destroys the principle of all good actions would destroy, if he could, all good actions themselves; and his disposition says unto God, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;” and, “Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us.” There is nothing, therefore, that implies so much wickedness, as to deprive men of the Scriptures; and it is the design of Papists and infidels to get the Scriptures banished from men’s homes and hearts. And if we consider a man guilty who robs his neighbour of valuable earthly treasures, how much more culpable is he who would deprive his fellow-creatures of the unsearchable riches of Christ! If they are guilty who have been instrumental in ruining the health or the reputation of others, what can we think of those who would poison their minds and would destroy their souls forever? And this is the wish and endeavour of the deniers and opposers

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of the Scriptures of truth; and God will give them credit for their design, and judge them according to their works and according to their wishes, for they may be guilty without being successful.

NOV. 11.—*And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.* Luke iv. 37.

THE Saviour did not commonly encourage such expressions: generally he forbade it, because “his hour was not yet come,” and because he would teach his followers, to the end of time to be willing to do good without noise or show, and without seeking the honour that cometh from men. But he could not be hid; as the Sun of righteousness, he could no more be hid than the sun of nature can. We may hide ourselves very easily from the sun, but we can never hide the sun. He said to those whom he had relieved and recovered, “Go your way, but hold your peace;” yet, instead of obeying him, they went forth and published it the more round about.” And there is a pleasure in contemplating the humility of the Giver and the thankfulness of the receiver. Who does not rejoice in the spread of his fame? Who does not wish his fame everywhere spread abroad? That which distresses Christians is, not so much that they are so little known, but that he is so little known. How lamentable it is to think that “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knew him not”! that “He came unto his own,” (the Jews,) “and his own received him not”! and that he is now “despised and rejected of men”! But he is not so regarded in another world. Oh, could we witness that world, we should find that there he attracts every eye, fills every heart, employs every tongue; and he will not thus be regarded always here, or long; for “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” And already the number of those who are concerned in spreading his fame is increasing; and the Lord add to his people, how many soever they be, a hundredfold! But it becomes all Christians to be engaged in this work,—the work of making him known and spreading his fame. Justice requires them to be thus employed. Fame is not always desert.

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There are many who are praised for qualities which they have not, at least in the measure and degree in which they are applauded. And then often when the actions are good, the motives that influence them, if they were known, would take away all the merit. There are some few of our fellow-creatures who deserve more fame than they have ever obtained; for there is much merit buried in obscurity in our world. But when we consider what he is, what he has done, and what he has suffered, who can avoid exclaiming,—

“Let him be crown’d with majesty
Who bow’d his head to death;
And be his honour sounded high
By all things that have breath”?

Gratitude requires us to be thus employed. How we feel a little kindness shown us by our fellow-creatures, when perhaps they have exercised no self-denial, made no sacrifice! But Jesus became incarnate; when rich, he became poor, and died that we might live: and shall not we be constrained to “show forth his praise”? Let us say, with the Psalmist, “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?” Let us speak well of his name, and recommend him to all around us. For *benevolence* requires us to be thus employed. Many are perishing for lack of knowledge, and the knowledge of him; for to know him is eternal life, and

“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.”

How many want this knowledge around us,—how many millions abroad! Oh, when will the period arrive when his fame shall be universal, and when it shall be said without a figure, “Behold, the world is gone after him”? The Lord hasten it in his time!

Nov. 12.—*And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

HERE we have an assurance of pardon. Observe the *Procurer*,—“The Son of God.” However this term may be explained, it always in Scripture means dignity. It does so when he is called the Son of man, as having taken upon him human nature; but especially when he is called the Son of God.

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“Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” But could he as the Son of God have blood to shed? Could he suffer and die? Here the matter is explained:—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” For, though the divine nature could not suffer, the human nature can; and so we read, “Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Thus, by partaking of our nature, he could suffer and die; and in consequence of this his blood is called “the blood of God.” Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Let us notice, Secondly, *The efficacy of his death*. “His blood cleanseth us from all sin.” It delivers us from the heinousness of it, however offensive it is in the eyes of a holy God. The application of this blood to our souls will deliver us from the love of sin, and make us “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto righteousness.” Thirdly, Let us mark *the extent* of it. It cleanseth from *all* sin:—from actual sin, and original sin; from *all* sin, however aggravated. And his blood cleanseth perfectly and completely from every transgression. Jesus by his one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. As saith the poet,—

“And his one offering takes away
Forever all our guilt.”

For if sin were to be unpardoned and unatoned for, it would be sufficient to plunge the sinner into endless perdition. Fourthly, *The personal reference*:—it “cleanseth *us* from all sin.” Yes, it cleanseth those who walk in the light as he is in the light, “and who have fellowship with him.” What! do *they* need pardon? Certainly: we know that “in many things we offend all,” and that in regard to our most holy things, our performance of them calls for condemnation rather than recompense. We are taught by the Saviour to pray for daily forgiveness as well as for daily bread.

Nov. 13.—*He shall choose our inheritance for us.* Ps. xlvii. 4.

LET us inquire, To what does this sentiment refer,—“Our inheritance”? Now, Canaan was the inheritance of the Jews: God chose this for them as their inheritance. Each of them could say, “The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage.” For it was “the glory of all lands,” and “flowed with milk and honey.” The Christian has “another and a better country,” “an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” for him; and this inheritance God has chosen for him, and he cannot be satisfied without the possession of it. “As for me,” says he, with David, “I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.” But the sentiment refers to time rather than eternity, and to God’s choice in the regulation of our allotments on earth. Thus, therefore, the Christian can say, He shall choose my inheritance for me. First, As to *residence*. He shall determine the bounds of my habitation, and the place of my abode, or the change of situation contrary to a fixed abode. These changes may be trying, but I know not what effects “with regard to myself or others” may result from them. Secondly, As to *occupation*. He shall determine the nature of my profession and calling. Thirdly, As to *condition*. He shall determine whether I shall serve him individually or relatively; whether I shall preside over a family or be written childless in the earth; whether I shall have friends, or whether I shall feel the want of them. Fourthly, As to *health*. He shall determine whether I am to serve him actively or passively, whether my strength shall be equal to my day and to my labour, and my hands be sufficient for me, or whether I shall be “made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights appointed to me.” Fifthly, As to *life* itself. He shall determine how long or how short shall be its continuance; and the time, place, mode, and means of my removal I leave with Him in whose hands my breath is, and “whose are all my ways.” Thus, as to all my interest, all that alarms my fears, all that excites my hopes, all that engages my expectations in the world, I commit to him, in compliance with his merciful commands and injunctions:—“Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee;” Commit thy way unto

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the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."

"My cares, I give you to the wind,
And cast you off like dust;
Well may we trust our all with him
With whom our souls we trust."

Nov. 14.—He *shall choose our inheritance for us*. Ps. xlvii. 4.

FIRST, He has a *right to choose*. He has a right much greater than that of the potter over the clay; a right still greater than that of a father over his children; a right derived from absolute propriety. For has he not a right to do what he will with his own? What right have we to choose? We have neither made ourselves, nor redeemed ourselves, nor sustained ourselves. From his wardrobe we have been clothed, at his table we have been fed. He it is that draws the curtains of night around us, and tells creation to be quiet while we slumber and sleep; and his mercies are new every morning. Secondly, God is *qualified* to choose for us. As the right belongs to him, so the ability belongs to him to judge, and his judgment is always according to truth. He can never be mistaken in his decision. He knoweth our frame. He can distinguish between our wants and our wishes. He knoweth what will be good for us, and what would prove injurious to us. But every thing unfits us for choosing our inheritance for ourselves. We are too ignorant, too selfish, and too impatient, for this purpose. Thirdly, Let us remember that he *has chosen for us already*. Why then should we abandon him now? He has proved himself every day increasingly worthy of our confidence: then why should we not approve of his designs? Fourthly, He is *willing to choose for us still*. Yes, this is wonderful, but it is true. If we had been placed under the direction and charge of any creature, even of an angel, he would long ago have abandoned us; but God has borne with our manners and perverseness in the wilderness. He has said, "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Then, finally, observe that we shall never feel peace and comfort till we know that all is under the care and direction of our heavenly Father,—that he has undertaken the charge of our all, in answer to our resolution:—"He shall choose our inheritance for us."

Nov. 15.—*In whom we have redemption through his blood.*

Eph. i. 7.

HIS blood here means his death; and the reason why his death is so often expressed by the word blood is twofold. First, It was to remind us of the *nature of it*:—that it was a bloody death. His anguish in the garden made him “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;” a crown of thorns upon his head made the blood to flow, as well as caused the most agonizing pain. They drove nails through his hands and feet, and fastened them to the cross; a soldier pierced his side, and “forthwith came there out blood and water.” Secondly, It was to remind us of the *nature of his sacrifice*:—“because the life is the blood.” Here, so to speak, we are reminded of the material of the atonement, namely, the life, for sin is the forfeiture of life. If any would become a substitute for a sinner in order to save him, he must die the death to which sin has exposed him. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” “But the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin,” for then, as the apostle says, “They would not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers would have had no more conscience of sin.” But these were renewed every year, every month, every week, every day, twice every day, four times every Sabbath-day, clearly showing that sin was not as yet expiated, but remained, against the transgressors. And as it was then so it must be now, had not He interposed who said, “Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God.” His blood was absolutely *necessary* and *all-available*. “In whom,” says the apostle, “we have redemption through his blood;” and “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

Nov. 16.—*The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.* Deut. xxxii. 9.

“THE Lord’s people” have always been comparatively few; yet not so few as some have imagined. Let us observe what God says concerning them all:—“I have reserved them *to myself*; they belong to me; I own them, and they acknowledge me.” So, as soon as God had delivered the law to Moses, he said, “Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my

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covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Therefore we find Moses here saying, "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." The Lord claims them as his own, and they acknowledge the propriety of the claim. They are witnesses,—his witnesses. They are worshippers,—his worshippers. They are servants,—his servants; as he says in the following chapter:—"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant; I have formed thee; for thou art my servant, O Israel; thou shalt not be forgotten of me." When John ascribes power and dominion to the Saviour, he says, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." If they were to reign, they were to reign for him; if they were to serve, they were to serve him. Therefore the glorified acknowledge, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." We were lost to him before, but now we are restored, by this purchase, to the owner, to whom every thing that pertains to us belongs by a thousand ties. Hence it is that none of us, if we are the Lord's, live unto ourselves, "but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." They are called "jewels." "They shall be *mine*," saith the Lord, "in that day when I make up my jewels." They are his "garden;" they are his "vineyard." God says, "I will water it every moment; I will keep it night and day, lest any hurt it." We here see how we should behave to all the Lord's people. This is an improvement of the subject which David leads us to make, when he addressed those who had been opposing him:—"O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?"—the old English word for lying. "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for *himself*." And God says to them, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye." We are to judge of them not by their outward condition and advantages, but by their relation to him. They are sacred as belonging to him. Christians, by a sense of their own littleness and unworthiness, often feel as if they were nothing; but there is an importance attached to them arising from their relation to God. What are others, whatever they may possess and enjoy, compared with "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty"? Then they should not be depressed by sorrow,

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or sink under their trials, but should ever remember to whom they belong, and say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

Nov. 17.—*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* Heb. xii. 22.

THE apostle refers to this as a privilege of the evangelical dispensation, and as distinguished from the Levitical economy. There are five different ways in which this may be exemplified. First, "We are come" to the *revelation of it in Scripture*. Here we have an answer to the question, "How shall we come before the Lord, and bow before the most high God?" The Jews had types and shadows of the Messiah who was to come; but we are come to a much clearer development of the mind and will of God, according to the words of our Saviour, who said, "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them." They had the dawn; we have the day. Then, Secondly, We are come *to the publication of it by the ministry of the word*. Thus the subject of it is not suffered to lie in the background, but is brought out from week to week by those who feel it their highest pleasure to place it before their hearers, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Then, Thirdly, We are come *to a saving knowledge and experience of it by the influences of the Holy Spirit*, so that we can say, with Paul, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Thus the Christian's condition is distinguished from that of many to whom the Saviour is made known in the Scriptures, and who hear of him by the preaching of the word, but in whom he has not as yet been revealed as the hope of glory. Fourthly, We are come *to a participation of it as an established ordinance in the Christian church*. For Jesus said, when he took the cup, "This is my blood of the new testament;" thus the institution was intended to be a memorial of him. "Do this," said he, "in remembrance of me." It was intended to be not only a memorial, but an emblem, wherein he is held forth as being food for the soul; and what a simple and a fine emblem it is! Fifthly, *This coming is a distinguishing privilege*. "Ye are come." Herein believers are distinguished

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from others; for how many are there who can turn their backs upon the Saviour as if he were “a root out of a dry ground”! There are some who would gladly repair to his table; but, though he is “all their salvation and all their desire,” they fear they have no part or lot in the matter. And how many are there who neglect and despise this Saviour, who continue to live in sin and worldly indulgences! There are others who do not honour him, but rather degrade him, by supposing that their case is too bad to be remedied, who think their sins are too many or too heinous to be forgiven. It is no easy thing to comfort a despairing soul: nothing will effectually satisfy the conscience of a convinced sinner but that which satisfies the justice of God. But surely that which satisfies his justice is enough to satisfy our conscience; and by believing we are enabled to enter into rest, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Nov. 18.—*Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* Ps. lxxxix. 19.

LET us consider, First, *That we need help.* This help refers to our spiritual welfare,—not to the things of time and sense. It refers to us not as mere creatures, but as fallen creatures. God does nothing in vain, and therefore he would not have been at the expense of providing a Saviour if we had not been lost. Christianity does three things for us. First, It tells us that this was not our original state; that “God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions.” Secondly, It checks much of the evils of depravity now, by its direct influence in many cases, and by its indirect influence in many more. It has done more for men than all human institutions in the aggregate besides. Through its means what efforts have been made to meet every kind of distress or woe! Then, Thirdly, and above all, It tells us of a remedy for all human depravity, which is placed within our reach if we will avail ourselves of it; and therefore, if we perish in this state, the blame will be our own. Secondly, We observe that, as we need help, *so God has provided it.* This is the grand peculiarity of the dispensation of the gospel, and it is the delightful office of its ministers to report this, and to show unto men the way of salvation. It is infinitely adapted to all our

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wants and weaknesses; it is also all-sufficient to meet the ravages of the evil. "Yea," said the apostle, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This help includes, First, *Redemption*. "With the Lord there is plenteous redemption." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Thus the burden too heavy to be borne is rolled off the conscience, and we now "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have now received the atonement." Secondly, It includes *justification*. Our relief from condemnation does not entitle us to glory, neither does the pardon of sin; but we must have a title to heaven before we can obtain it; and from whence is this to be derived, but from the righteousness of Christ by faith which is unto and upon all that believe? Thirdly, It takes in *renovation*. Man is not only guilty, but depraved; therefore he cannot be happy while in his natural state and under the dominion and love of sin. In this condition it is impossible for him to serve God or hold communion with him; therefore he must be renewed, he must become spiritually-minded. Fourthly, In *strength*. The Christian's duties are arduous; they are numerous and various, and he is inadequate to any one of them; but, says the Saviour, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness." The blessed Spirit also is promised and enjoyed; and now the man lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit, and prays in the Spirit, who also helps his infirmities. Lastly, It takes in *persevering grace*; for he only "that endureth to the end shall be saved." Perseverance is not only required of us as a duty, hut is insured to us as a privilege. We are not only commanded to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," but we have the promise, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger."

Nov. 19.—*I have laid help upon one that is mighty.*

Ps. lxxxix. 19.

WE observe, First, *That He on whom our help is laid is equal to the engagement*. Many a one has been appointed to an office the duties of which he has been inadequate to fulfil. The enterprise has thereby failed; and if the man has not involved himself in ruin, he has not escaped reflection and reproach; for there is

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nothing that disgraces a man more than incompetency in this respect; when the work is voluntary, and he has engaged in it without accomplishing the same, "all that pass by begin to mock, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Observe, Secondly, *That God's appointment of a person to a work is a pledge of its final accomplishment.* God said to Gideon, "Go in this thy might." What might? His own? He was threshing in a barn. No; but, Go in the might with which I have invested thee, and thou shalt be adequate to the work to which I have called thee and send thee to accomplish. So said God of Cyrus, "He is my anointed. I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates." His appointment was a proof that he should succeed. So it is in the highest degree with our Lord and Saviour. But this does not go far enough. The Saviour's ability to save is not relative only, but *personal*. He has "the Spirit without measure." He is not only human, but divine. "All things were made by him, and he upholdeth all things." Well therefore may it be said of him that he is "mighty to save." His is the power of God, and this gives infinite value to his mediation; hence was he able to procure eternal salvation for us. "He trod the wine-press alone." "By his one offering up of himself he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." He said, when he died, "It is finished," and it was finished forever. He is able to save, moreover, seeing the *whole dispensation of the Spirit is lodged in his hands* and administered at his pleasure. So it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, after a notable display of the Holy Spirit's influence, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth that which ye now see and hear." All the miracles were performed in his name. All the operations of divine grace are through him. Hence he says, "This people have I formed for myself." We may well, therefore, say, with the Psalmist, "Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thine hand, and high is thy right hand." Thou art "mighty to save,"—"able to save to the uttermost." We should remember this with regard to others, and never despair of the conversion of any. And we should remember this with regard to ourselves. Are our sins great and numerous? He can save even the chief of sinners.

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“This powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.”

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” He can, by his influences, so mighty is he, penetrate the darkest understanding and enlighten it. He can subdue the most rebellious. He can take away the stony heart and give us out of our flesh a heart of flesh.

Nov. 20.—*We are his workmanship.* Eph. ii. 10.

WHEN we consider what the Scriptures say concerning the depravity and corruption of our nature, and which we know to be true from all history, observation, and experience, how wonderful is it that any of the fallen race should be found in possession of moral excellence, or what the Scriptures call true holiness! The cause may naturally awaken and engage our attention. From whence comes this transformation? It cannot arise from the creature; for how can the remedy spring from the disease? “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and, however modified, cannot be otherwise. The stream cannot rise higher than the fountain. There is no effect without a cause, and an inadequate cause, say the Schoolmen, is no cause at all. As man could not produce it in himself, so neither could others for him. Neither men nor angels, nor men and angels combined, could have produced this transformation. It is above the power of education, or of moral suasion; and if we turn to the Scriptures, we shall find the sacred writers (and in language too plain to require the aid of philosophy to explain) ascribe this new creation to the agency of God. They, without exception, acknowledge this great moral change, from the beginning to the end, to be the work of God’s Holy Spirit; therefore we read of Christians “living in the Spirit,” “walking in the Spirit,” and of their being “led by the Spirit.” So we read of “worshipping God in the Spirit,” and of “praying in the Holy Ghost.” He may, as the God of grace, and he does, make use of instrumentality. And to carry into effect his own gracious purposes in the salvation of sinners, he employs agency; for, so far from excluding it, he absolutely enjoined it. The book is not written without the pen, nor can the pen write without the hand to hold it. “Who, then, is Paul,

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and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Let us observe, also, how this operation is represented. It is called a creation; and who can create but God only? It is called a resurrection; and who can raise the dead, God only excepted? "But you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Every believer is ready to acknowledge that God alone can change the heart and produce this transformation; and when the question is put to him, "Who niaketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" he will, without any hesitation, reply, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "By the grace of God I am what I am." But his desire will be that the work begun may be carried on until the day of redemption, and he will pray, with the Psalmist, "Forsake not the work of thine own hands."

Nov. 21.—*Thou shall guide me with thy counsel.* Ps. lxxiii. 24.

THIS determination to place ourselves under the guidance of the Almighty implies the renunciation of pride and vanity, the sacrifice of self-will, self-conceit, and self-sufficiency. It implies a willingness to have our inclinations crossed, and our fond earthly hopes destroyed. And we may feel assured of this,—that the man is a stranger to the thing itself, whoever he is, who views it as an easy attainment. No; such a character is not formed without strong supplications to Him who is able to keep us from falling,—much striving against besetting sins, much observation upon the misery and mistakes of others, much experience of those evils to which we have found ourselves exposed when, instead of trusting in the Lord with all our heart, we have leaned to our own understanding. And, after all, there are some remains of this wretched leaven still left in the Christian. But there are distinguished, there are hallowed, heavenly hours, in which the Christian, with a holy heroism, can relinquish all, and, falling upon his knees, can say, "The Lord shall choose mine inheritance for me;" "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." The generality of mankind have no abiding impression of God upon their minds; they do not

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refer to God's glory in their pursuits, nor do they use means to ascertain his will in reference to their movements in life, nor are they desirous to secure his approbation. Let us therefore, in reference to any important removal in prospect, seek divine guidance, and turn not to the right hand nor to the left but as we see the pillar of his providence directing us,—never moving without a conviction of its being right; otherwise we cannot expect peace and satisfaction. How much attaches, as to our future course through life, upon any wrong step we may take! Such a course may produce a thousand bitter regrets, and cause repentance to be quartered upon us for the rest of our life. Where, then, is our safety but in seeking direction of the Lord, saying, "Thou, Lord, shalt choose our inheritance for us"?

Nov. 22.—*Neither is there salvation in any other.* Acts iv. 12.

How important it is for us to know what is our spiritual state! This knowledge is not only desirable, but it is absolutely necessary. Without this knowledge it would be impossible for us to see the beauty of the gospel, or ever to be sensible of the evil of sin or the excellency of purity, or to relish the privileges of the righteous. Yea, the gospel, without this knowledge, would be repulsive to us; it would be like offering alms to the wealthy, or pardon to the innocent. Nor need we be afraid of knowing what our condition is,—of knowing what we are and what we deserve; but we should be concerned to avail ourselves of this knowledge, that we may seek after the relief provided. It is indeed absolutely necessary for us to know how we must be saved, lest we should incur the guilt of the man who built his house upon the sand, instead of placing all our hopes upon that rock which God has laid in Zion. Christ is the only ark in which we can be preserved; if we enter into this, we shall be saved. Some have vainly asked, Is there any other way? If there be, it is either secret or revealed: if secret, nothing can be known or said about it. The apostle here expressly declares, what all Scripture abundantly confirms, that there is salvation in none other than in Jesus. Hence we read, "Help was laid upon one that is mighty;" and no man cometh unto the Father but by Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Let us therefore turn away from every thing else, and look only and entirely to him. Let us look for

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all we hope to Him upon whom the Almighty has laid help, remembering the language of the apostle:—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith shall be accounted unto him for righteousness:" as much as if he should have said, "Leave off building your edifice, which will not shield you from the storm of divine wrath, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel." "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? [that is, to bring Christ down from above:] or, Who shall descend into the deep? [that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.] But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" for the Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." There is salvation in none other than in one almighty Deliverer. He is the sinner's Saviour, in whom we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places."

Nov. 23.—*The blood of sprinkling.* Heb. xii. 24.

It is not enough that the Saviour's blood should be shed; it must be applied: and it is in reference to this that it is called "the blood of sprinkling." "The law was the shadow of good things to come, but the body was Christ." We must therefore observe the correspondence between the type and the reality. We may refer to a few of those instances in which the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled after it was shed. We read that "by faith Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." On the day of atonement, to which there is such frequent reference in this epistle, the high-priest was to go into the holy place with the blood of the sacrifice in a basin, and there sprinkle it seven times to make an atonement for the sins of the people. When Moses descended from the Mount Horeb, having received the law from God, "he wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning and builded an altar under the hill," that was to represent God, "and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes

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of Israel;" these were to represent the people. "And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people. And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning these words." Thus we find both parties were consecrated. God was thus under an obligation to bless, and they were under an obligation to obey. The one was thus engaged to provide, and the other to serve, as it was a mutual contract. In the consecration of the priests, a ram was always offered; and the blood was "sprinkled on the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear of his sons, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot;" thus teaching us that God required an entire consecration to his glory from head to foot. In the cleansing of the leper, there were two birds to be taken alive and cleaned. One of these birds was to be killed, and the blood was to be sprinkled seven times upon him that was to be cleansed of his leprosy. The other bird was to be let loose in the open field, to show that the man was now at liberty, and no longer forbidden to approach the camp or the tabernacle. Thus in the Scriptures blood was used to atone, to ratify, to consecrate, to purify, and to heal; and in all these cases the effect arises from the application of the blood after it was shed. Ah! here alone is the blood which cleanses from the leprosy of sin, the blood that consecrates us to a holy priesthood, to the service of God; the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood that makes reconciliation for the sins of the people, the blood by which we receive the atonement, and the blood by which we escape the stroke of the destroying angel.

Nov. 24.—*The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* Heb. xii. 24.

THE blood of Abel here referred to is typical. The language is used comparatively. Abel's blood was shed by wicked and cruel hands; so was the blood of Christ. Abel's blood was shed

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by his own brother according to the flesh. Abel's blood spake; so did the blood of Christ. But here comparison becomes contrast. In common language we say of the murdered, His blood cries aloud for vengeance. So it is said of the sins of Sodom, that the cry of them came up before God. The dreadful crime committed by Cain is referred to in a bold but very elegant figure:—"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." The action was horrid: it was the murder of a brother because his works were righteous. No wonder that such guilt should have provoked the wrath of God. But the blood of Christ was not only shed by men, but for them; and "his blood speaketh better things than that of Abel," for Abel's blood speaks and calls to God for punishment, but the blood of Christ speaks and calls for pardon. The one calls for the death of the murderer, the other calls for—oh, marvellous mercy and grace!—his life. The blood of Abel only called for the destruction of one murderer; the blood of Christ calls for the life of the world, and for salvation for the vilest upon earth, even for those who shed his blood. Therefore he said to his disciples, "When ye preach the gospel, begin at Jerusalem: let those who smote the rock drink of it first." Yes, he died to give himself a ransom for sinners, and by his death has shown God's displeasure and abhorrence of sin, and "he was raised up from the dead that our faith and hope might be in him." His death was "a sacrifice, and an offering to God of a sweet-smelling savour," and here "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." Yea, it is more glorious to God that Christ thus died, than if an apostate world had all perished. He now appears for us above as our High-Priest, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us." This blood speaks also to *us* as well as to God. Abel's blood spoke not only to God but to Cain; that is, it spoke in his conscience, filling him with horror, and following him wherever he went. He may have become a builder, but he could get no rest; so he became a fugitive and a vagabond upon earth. Christ's blood speaks peace to all Christians; it tranquillizes the soul; it encourages the penitent; it shows that God is gracious, yea, that "God is love," for "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It shows us the possibility of salvation for the very chief of sinners; it tells us how Jesus

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hath "made peace by the blood of his cross,"—that, therefore, we may venture into the holiest of all by his precious blood.

Nov. 25.—*This people have I formed for myself.*
Isa. xliii. 21.

Now, there are three formations which we may notice. The first is *national*. In this class we place the Jews. They were formed a commonwealth by the agency of God. He called Abraham when alone, and blessed him. Then he gave his seed the land flowing with milk and honey. He gave them laws and ordinances of a peculiar nature, and distinguished them by dispensations the most wonderful and glorious; so that Moses could say, "What nation is there so great? who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?" Yet he complains, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." So said Moses concerning them:—"Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." The second of these formations is *natural*. Here all mankind are included, for "we are all the work of his hands," "we are fearfully and wonderfully made." If we contemplate the human frame, and observe the body, the complexity of its vessels, the multitude of its organs, and how many of these are too minute for research; then if we think of the soul, its consciousness, its knowledge, its capacity for expansion, and its powers; and if we also think of the conjunction of these two,—a piece of clay and thought united together, combined in the very same formation, (for he is the framer of our flesh and the former of our spirits,) we shall arrive at the same conclusion with one of old,—that "there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." In the third of these formations we place all the subjects of divine influence. In the words before us, the Lord is speaking of "this people," not as the creatures of his power or as the beneficiaries of his providence, but as the children of his grace. Our relation to him as our Benefactor and Preserver and Maker will not insure our safety. We may rejoice in the thought that we are the work of his hands, but he has expressly said of his ancient people, "Because they are a people of no understanding, therefore he that formed them will not have

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mercy on them, and he that created them will show them no favour." Now, all real Christians are renewed in the spirit of their minds. The understanding, which was darkness, is now made light in the Lord. The rebellious will is subdued to the obedience of Christ. The affections which were "earthly, sensual, devilish," are now "set on things above," and the conversation is in heaven. The very conscience which was defiled is "purified from dead works to serve the living God." These are "the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "These are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And to each and to all of these God looks down and says, "This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise."

Nov. 26.—*They shall show forth my praise.* Isa. xliii. 21.

THERE are two ways in which "this people" "show forth" God's praise. The first is *subjectively*. Thus, we read, "All his works praise him." How? By evincing his agency; by wearing impressions of his attributes, of his power, and his wisdom, and his goodness, employed in their production. And if we enter into the world of grace, we see how Christians *passively* show forth his praise,—how they display his praise as to his grace, in his kindness towards them that believe in Christ Jesus. Some of them, therefore, were allowed to go such lengths as to render it impossible that they should ever return. Saul of Tarsus seemed beyond the possibility of being reclaimed: even those who were acquainted with their own hearts were afraid of him; and when he essayed to join them, they drew back as sheep from a wolf. Yet we hear him say, "I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious, yet I obtained mercy." As if he had said, "Now let any despair if they can." While this discovers the freeness of his grace, it equally shows its power. To take a sinner and turn the whole tide of his soul another way requires the mighty power of God. The worse the materials, the more is displayed the ability of the workman. Now, if we only think of his taking from the ruins of the fall such a people as this, and making them an "eternal excellency, the joy of many generations," we shall at once see who deserves all this praise. Themselves? No; but the God of all grace. Then they not only show forth his praise

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passively, but, secondly, *actively*. Not only by what they are, but by what they do. Men may subserve a purpose, without intending it, without ever meaning it,—by an overruling providence. Thus, we are told that the “wrath of men shall praise him.” But God’s people are his willing subjects: they hold themselves at his disposal, and ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” They consider all they have as belonging to him,—all their senses, faculties, and substance; and then, instead of improperly expending it, they adore the Giver, and dedicate it to him. They “honour the Lord with their substance”, and with the first-fruits of all their increase.” This is the result:—“They shall show forth my praise.” Men may have nothing more than the desire of accomplishing some particular object; and how often are their purposes broken off and their plans frustrated! but it is otherwise with God. He says, “I will work, and who shall let it?” God speaks like himself. He is almighty, as well as infinitely wise. As in the first creation of the world he spake and it was done, so in the new he calls things that are not, and they appear. While others dishonour him, “this people,” says he, “shall show forth my praise.” They shall have the inclination, and they shall have the power, the opportunity, and the means of praising me. When? Principally hereafter, when their power shall be equal to their work, and their wishes too; when they shall praise him by still serving him, not simply by singing, as it is sometimes imagined, for it is written, “They shall serve him day and night in his temple.” But here, also, even now, he gets himself glorified! Here we have an advantage which the glorified above have not; that is, we have the power of doing good and of exercising charity, of clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick, of extending and advancing the kingdom of God. “The living, the living, they shall praise thee.”

Nov. 27.—*The sons of God.* 1 John iii. 2.

WE have here to consider a distinguished privilege. It consists in our relation to God. “We are the sons of God.” By this the apostle means much more than our relation to him as our Maker and Benefactor, “in whom we live and move and have our being.” It is very true that we have some claim upon God as being his creatures, for surely he will have “respect to the

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work of his hands." But as far as we are *sinner*s we are not the work of his hands,—we are not *his* children, hut the children of the wicked one. But the Christian has experienced a change. He not only feels that there is a relative change accomplished by adoption, but also a personal change accomplished by regeneration; for, as he is adopted, so he is born of God,—new-born,—“born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Therefore, with the name he has the nature, and with the rank he has the *heart*, of a child. Now, what a privilege does this relation constitute! We know how the Jews prided themselves in having Abraham for their father, and with what pleasure David spake of being son-in-law to the king. Yet all the lines of human nobility are found to originate in one first pair, where all are upon a perfect level. But Christians can go much higher: they are the *children of God*; and this distinction confers true and *real honour*, compared with which all human grandeur vanishes into insignificance. Oh, let us then consider that his wisdom, his power, his greatness, and his love are towards all that stand in this relation to him; and while they gaze upon his works in the earth and in the starry heavens, and reflect upon their number, they can say, My Father made them all, governs them all, upholds them all. Yea, “He doeth according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;” and “he doeth all things well!” An earthly parent may be unable to afford relief and tenderness to a child in distress and danger, “but nothing is too hard for the Lord.” This relation gives us *free access to God*: at all times, under all circumstances, we can enter his presence and spread before him what we are perhaps unwilling to communicate to the dearest fellow-creature upon earth. We ought indeed at all times to entertain the most reverential thoughts of God; nor can we sufficiently adore him; but oh, how blessed it is to feel that he is our Father, and that we are embosomed in his love! Then as to the *tuition* of these sons of God: he will not have his children brought up in ignorance, nor will he trust their education to another; the promise is, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” And, moreover, their heavenly Father has *secured for them a sufficiency of temporal supplies*. He has engaged to feed and clothe them. If, as the Saviour says, “He feeds the fowls of the

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air and clothes the grass of the field, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And, besides all this, Christians have *an inheritance* reserved in heaven for them.

Nov. 28.—*Now are we the sons of God.* I John iii. 2.

BELIEVERS are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, called so because then every thing will be displayed and revealed. It will then "appear what they shall be." But now under all their disadvantages they are the "sons of God." Every thing is not future with the Christian. He is *now* saved by grace; believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he *is* justified from all things, from which he could not have been justified by the law of Moses. Now, *though they are despised, and reproached, and persecuted by the world.* The apostle had just said, "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." It does not discern the excellency of the Christian character; even the apostles were regarded "the filth and offscouring of all things." And the Saviour himself "was despised and rejected of men." Therefore, said he, "Marvel not if the world hate you: ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Even in their elevated and sanctified condition they may suffer much in their persons, connections, and circumstances. This is so far from being incompatible with sonship that the apostle says, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" And again, "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Now, *though assailed by the enemy of souls.* Some of God's children are ready to say, "As to temptation, I think none know so much of it as I. The enemy of my soul follows me into the closet, and into the house of God, and even to the Supper of the Lord; he embitters all my comforts, and I fear will destroy my soul at last." *But he never will;* although

"He worries whom he can't devour,

With a malicious joy."

Believers are the sons of God even when they are destitute of inward

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peace and joy. When Isaiah describes a believer as one “who feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant,” he at the same time represents him as “walking in darkness, and having no light.” David says, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” And the church thus expresses herself:—“I will wait upon him who hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.” *Yes, Christians are now the children of God, though full of doubts and fears.* They should always exercise the fullest confidence in God; yet what wonder is it if they should feel self-suspicious, after being so often betrayed by the enemy of souls! self-delusion is not only possible, but as common as it is dreadful. Therefore let us seek to exercise holy confidence in the power and grace of God. How much does our peace of mind depend upon our thus realizing that we are “the sons of God”!

Nov. 29.—*As for God, his way is perfect.* Ps. xviii. 30.

In a parallel passage God's way is called his work, where it is said, “God is the rock; his work is perfect.” The meaning, however, is the same, and applies to the whole course of his proceedings. Let us therefore observe,—First, His way in *creation*; and we shall find this to be perfect. Hence, when the first creation was produced, we read that the angels (and they were no mean judges) “sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But we have also the declaration of the Judge of all, who, when he had finished the work, pronounced it to be very good. All his works praise him by bearing impressions of his attributes and designs. There is an immense difference between the productions of men and the works of God. If we take a piece of human workmanship, however exquisite it may be, on examination we shall find it capable of improvement, so that the more we know of it the less we admire it. But it is otherwise with the works of God: they are a source of wonder and admiration. Here there is nothing redundant, nothing defective; nothing can be added, nothing taken away. Here, as we examine, we feel ourselves not on the verge of perfection only, but even of infinity, and we exclaim, not only admiringly, but adoringly too, “This thing proceedeth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and mighty in working.” Secondly, This will apply to his way in *redemption*. In the

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economy of redemption, there is something so benevolent in the design, so infinitely wonderful in the contrivance, so exceedingly adapted to all the circumstances of man as a fallen creature, and all harmonizing with the divine perfections, that even now the believer can exclaim, with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," and he is "determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Thirdly, His way in *renovation* is perfect. We readily conclude that it is not finished at once; but then it is perfect as far as it goes. It is perfect in kind and degree, though not perfect in its consummation. But this consummation is as certain as if it were present or had already taken place. The apostle, therefore, says to the Philippians, "He"—that is, God—"who hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Lastly, In the dispensations of *providence* his work is perfect. There is no such thing as chance. What we call chance is nothing less than the appointment and the work of God. But "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and "he doeth all things well."

Nov. 30.—*If any man serve me, let him follow me.*
John xii. 26.

THAT is, let him be in reality what he professes to be. Let him not serve me in word and in tongue only, but also in deed and in truth. Let him "follow me," that as my servant he shall be distinguished by coming after me, by which he will promote my glory, advance my cause, and "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." A servant is always to be within his master's call, and in a state of readiness to attend upon his orders; he is chiefly distinguished by devotedness to his master's pleasure. "His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Now, to "follow Christ" is to observe his precepts, imbibe his spirit, and to imitate his example. These are indispensable. It is said of the Saviour that "he began both to do and to teach:" he went before his disciples in all that he enforced upon them. Does he command us to be holy in all manner of conversation? "He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners." Does he command us to be humble? "He

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was meek and lowly in heart;" he washed his disciples' feet; he said, "I am among you as one that serveth." Does he command us "to do good and to communicate"? "He went about doing good." He it was that said, "Give alms of such things as ye possess." It was he "who loved us and gave himself for us." Who requires us to be fervent in spirit? It is he who said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Who orders us to be patient and forgiving? It is he "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; who, when he suffered, murmured not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously;" he who prayed for his persecutors, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His example, therefore, was the law and the gospel in a living and an embodied form. It is a body of theology and morality itself, and is recorded for this very purpose; "and he that saith he abideth in the truth ought himself also so to walk even as he walked;" for "as is the heavenly, so are they also that are heavenly," and, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Dec. 1.—*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.* 1 John iii. 2.

WE have here an intimation of *the obscurity that veils the Christian's future destination*. And it is well that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" for the full disclosure would be too much for our poor faculties now. The full display of them here would render us insensible to many things which have claim upon us. But the full disclosure would be also impossible, if proper; for with regard to the Christian's future condition there is that which no human understanding can now take in. The medium through which we make discoveries, as well as our faculties and powers of mind, are very defective, and will remain so till we hear the voice from heaven saying unto us, "Come and see." It doth not yet appear what we shall be in *the intermediate state*. The apostle tells us that "absent from the body we shall be present with the Lord." But what do we know of the soul in its unembodied state, and of its retaining its consciousness when freed from material organization? The body and soul now participate in all our sorrows and enjoyments. But what do we know of the feeling of the soul when set free from this?—whether

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it has any knowledge of or any communication from the material world?—whether the “spirits of the just made perfect” know one another before the resurrection?—for now we know one another by the body, not by the soul. It doth not yet appear what we shall be *in the resurrection of the just*. What do we know of the difference there will be between our present and our future bodies? It will be the *same* body, but *infinitely superior*. “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;” but what know we of the qualities of these? What conceptions have we of a spiritual body?—of a body that can render itself visible or invisible, and that can by a wish transport itself from one region to another? What know we of a body that needs no food or sleep,—that is incapable of any accident, or disease, or of death? What know we of a body which, instead of being a toil, a burden, or a clog, will even *add* to the soul’s perfection, and enable it to enjoy pleasure and delight more completely than without it? It doth not yet appear what we shall be in *social intercourse*. Moses and Elias, when they appeared on the mount of transfiguration, *spake*, and spake of our Saviour’s death, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul tells us of words he heard when caught up to the third heaven, which were not lawful for a man to utter; and he speaks of the tongues of angels and of men. Do they depend, then, upon the utterance of words as a medium of communication of thought, as it is with us here? Are words arbitrary signs, as they are with us? Or what better mode have they? We know not what latent power awaits us when we shall be born out of this embryo state into another and happier world. It doth not yet appear what we shall be as to *employment*, nor as to our *pleasures*; after all the experience of believers, (and they have a much better acquaintance by experience than from all the works they have ever read, or all the sermons they have ever heard,)—after all they know of its earnestness and foretastes,—after all their views and feelings on which they have often said,—

“While such a scene of sacred joy
 My raptured eyes and ears employ,
 Lord, I would sit and gaze away
 A long and everlasting day.”

Dec. 2.—*We know that when HE SHALL APPEAR WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM.* 1 John iii. 2.

WE are favoured with a partial development of the future glory of the sons of God, and we are enabled to see how far it extends and how much it comprehends. First, The apostle says, with all our ignorance, we know that *he shall appear*. He is now hid as to his presence and glory; but we read of his being revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, and of his coming to be admired in all them that believe. The appearance of our Lord here spoken of is personal, in distinction from his dispensation. This, we think, is not the appearance some are looking for. We only read in the Scriptures of two personal appearances of the Saviour: one of these is past, the other is future. He has appeared once. He appeared as “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” In the other “he shall appear in his glory,” and shall “sit upon the throne of his glory.” Before “him shall be gathered all nations.” Once, in the end of the world, shall “he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.” Oh, the solemnity of his appearance! Oh, the glory of that scene! Then infidels will believe, but it will be too late. Then worldlings will see that all their hoardings and treasures are gone forever. Then Christians will see the wisdom of their choice, and will “lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh.” And while the kingdoms of the earth wail because of him, and are ashamed and confounded at his appearance, they will be enabled to exclaim, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him: this is our God; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Secondly, The apostle says, notwithstanding all our ignorance, this we know,—*that when he shall appear we shall be like him*. Christians will be like their Lord in holiness. This is remarkable when we consider how inherently and universally we have been depraved. What a miracle of grace is here! that we should be transformed into the image of Him who is the “brightness of his Father’s glory and the express image of his person.” The likeness is here begun. They have the same views and dispositions as their Divine Lord, but neither in their measure or degree. Here they have only the outlines impressed, but then the whole figure will be filled up. The mind will then be freed from all error, from every thing perverse, from

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all vile affections, and from an irregular and carnal bias. Every Christian will then be as pure as Adam was in Paradise, and as the angels of God; yea, like the Son of God, abiding forever. This likeness will extend to the body. The apostle therefore says, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." By the heavenly, then, he means the heavenly body. Yes, this vile body of our humiliation will be changed, that it may be "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." It will take in the *state*, too. There will be likeness to him in this:—"He is our life;" "And when he who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." And to the conquerors of sin, self, and the world, he says, "I grant you to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

Dec. 3.—*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.* Rev. xiv. 4.

OUR following the Saviour takes in *three things*. First, It must be *free and voluntary*. "My son, give me thine heart." If it be given to him, nothing will be withholden. If this is withholden, nothing else will be acceptable to him, for

"He abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found."

What he requires he infinitely deserves; and therefore, to gain the heart,—to make his "people willing in the day of his power,"—he opens the eyes of their understanding, he unveils to their view his personal glory, makes them sensible how much they owe to him, and brings them to his cross and says, "Behold my hands and my feet." "Thus he draws them with the cords of love and the bands of a man;" and they run after him, and find his yoke easy and his burden light. Secondly, Our following him must be *impartial*. Hence it is said, "They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." It is true that their obedience while here is not perfect, but then it is not partial. They say, "Therefore I esteem thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." They come to him, not to bargain, not to prescribe,

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not to choose. They throw down their will at his feet, and their only question is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Thirdly, Our following him must be *constant*. The goodness of Ephraim was as "the morning cloud, and the early dew, which passeth away." And the Galatians did run well, but they were hindered. "But he only that endureth to the end shall be saved." When our Saviour was upon earth some followed him for a season only. One day a large number went back and walked no more with him, and our Saviour took occasion then to address his disciples, saying, "Will ye also go away?" But they said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." We may be assured of this:—that what comes from God will also lead to him. Hence, says the apostle, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." And so it will be with all the subjects of divine grace. Each of them will be able to say, "To the—praise of his glory by whom we have been kept through faith unto eternal salvation;" and with Job, "My foot hath held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Or, with the afflicted church, "Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons," and "covered us with the shadow of death." This is what the apostle enjoins upon the Corinthians:—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Dec. 4.—*He is a buckler to all them that trust in him.*
2 Sam. xxii. 31.

GOD is here metaphorically set forth as the defence of his people. Let us first observe the metaphor employed. It is a "buckler." A buckler is a shield: it is called a buckler, because it is bound by a buckle on the arm for security and use. The metaphor David here employs he explains himself, when he says, "But my defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart." Christians are exposed to ten thousand enemies; they have enemies temporal, spiritual, and infernal; and if they were

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left to themselves there would be enough to make their hearts sink within them: but, as David says, their “defence is of God.” Some bucklers have been made of leather, some of wood, some of iron, some of steel, and some belonging to David even of silver and gold; but the shield of the Christian is *divine*. How *impenetrable* is their defence!—how *valuable*!—how it *covers all the interests of a believer* in Jesus! Protected by this, what can Satan or the world do? Injure his substance? But God has made a hedge round about it. His reputation? But “thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.” His body? “He keepeth all his bones.” His soul? “He shall preserve thy soul:” and this is the grand thing; this is the main interest: that which relates to his substance and his earthly interest may be injured; yea, he may lose these; not because God is unable to preserve them, but because he hath not promised to secure them absolutely. All temporal blessings are promised in the Scriptures only conditionally; that is, if they be good for us. As far as these outward blessings are for our good, they are equally sure with our spiritual ones; but the loss of them may be even beneficial to our religious welfare. However this may be, whatever is essential to our spiritual and everlasting welfare, we may rest assured, is absolutely promised. Hence the promises, “Sin shall *not* have dominion over you;” “The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Then let us observe, Secondly, The characters that lay claim to his protection:—“He is a buckler to all them that *trust in him*.” It is common for all writers to express the whole by a part; but then it must be an essential part. It is the same with the sacred writers: they hold forth the whole by a part; hence they express the whole of religion by “trusting in the Lord;” and we need not wonder at this, because religion takes its rise from this source. Man fell by losing his trust in God, and is only to be recovered by the restoration of it. Lastly, we may observe the *universality of the claimants*:—“He is a buckler to *all* them that trust in him.” Liberality has its bounds: it cannot do every thing, it often cannot do much. Friendship has its partiality: we cannot take every one into our own bosom; but as for God, his tender mercies are over all his works. And if we pass over his compassion and come to his complacency, we read that “he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.” It equally

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regards all these, without respect to persons; all of every nation that call upon his name; all of every *condition*,—Onesimus the slave and Philemon the master, Zenas the lawyer and Luke the physician; all of every degree of grace, and of every degree of faith, where it is real. Thomas with his weak faith, and the centurion with his strong faith, are all one in him, and are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. "Happy is the people that is in such a case! Yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

Dec. 5.—*The sufferings of this present time.* Rom. viii. 18.

WITH regard to Christians now, their sufferings consist principally of *the ills and adversities of human life*. These God permits, these he sends in the course of his providence, and these subserved the purposes of persecution in particular ages of the church. These are the briers and thorns which naturally grow out of our condition, and induce us to exclaim, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" There are the *disappointments* of the way, by which our purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of our heart; there are our *hodily pains, indispositions*, and sufferings, and which cause us to exclaim, with Job, "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto me." There are also our *social evils*,—when the mother closes the eye of the child she bore and bred, and at her bosom fed, and when the husband hears the sentence, "Son of man, behold, I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke," and when the man stripped and peeled is like a sparrow alone upon the house-top, who also says, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." Indeed, there are a thousand sources of suffering that open to us in this vale of tears. Nothing gives us pleasure but is capable of yielding us pain; nothing can awaken hope that cannot also produce fear. But why are these called "the sufferings of this present time"? Doubtless for *these* reasons. First, Because a state of suffering is the character of this life. Hence old Jacob said, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Job said, "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." And Solomon exclaimed, from his own experience, as well as on other grounds,

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“All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” It will be well for us to enter upon every condition with this expectation. It will be well for those who are indulged in the morning of life to remember the admonition of Solomon:—“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they too shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.” And as to Christians, what other expectation are they authorized to entertain? They know they are in an enemy’s country; they know they are far from home, and that it is “through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom.” Secondly, Because they are necessary to it: we mean morally so. This is a state of trial, of probation, and of preparation; for if we are to be weaned from earth, to have our conversation in heaven, to breathe after future blessedness, to live much in prayer, to be attached to the sanctuary, to sympathize with the afflicted, to speak a word in season to them that are weary, to glorify God in the fires, to resemble our Lord and Saviour, why, then the sufferings of this present time are *indispensable*. And, Thirdly, Because they are *confined to it*. This is not the case, indeed, with all. For those who are unpardoned and unrenewed, these privations and trials and sufferings here will only be the beginnings of sorrow. But it is otherwise with the Christian. The Christian’s sufferings are for the *present time only*. This gives us a pleasing view of death. Death is the offspring of sin, yet it is the destroyer of it: as says an old writer, “God sends death to kill sin, but by killing sin it destroys itself also as well as sorrow, which is the consequence of sin.” It is thus the curse is turned into a blessing. It is thus the enemy proves to be a friend.

Dec. 6.—*If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

John xii. 26.

SUCH a man will be sure to abase himself; he will “abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.” “He that exalteth himself,” says Christ, “shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Some of them may be vilified by the world, which lieth in wickedness; but what harm can the reproaches and revilings of man do unto us, if we have God’s smile and God’s commendation? We value honour, and we ought to value

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it according to the quarter from whence it comes. The applause of a wicked man is real censure when it is derogatory to God's honour. An Athenian philosopher turned round and said to his admirers, "What harm have I done, to deserve your applause?" An ingenious writer has observed, that to live in the esteem and affections of the really wise and good is like walking in an Eastern spice-grove. What then must it be to enjoy the favour of God? "Skin for skin," said Satan, "all that a man hath, will he give for his life." Life is the most precious of all things; but "his favour is life," and his "loving-kindness is *better* than life." And this assurance must be accomplished. "If any man serve me, him *will* my Father honour." My Father will honour him in life; he will correspond with him, he will *visit* him, he will *distinguish* him. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." They have more glory, they have more attendants, than any monarch upon earth; angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." What an honour does God put upon his people, in that he makes all his dispensations to exemplify the language of the prophet to King Asa—"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." In times of public *calamity* how often has he induced profligate men to say, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous"! God is their God now, and will be theirs in future and eternal ages. He does not wait till they reach home; he begins to immortalize them now in time. He owns them on this side the grave, and makes the dying chamber of the Christian to be the "very gate of heaven." Oh to be confessed before him, before an assembled world, and before his angels,—to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"!

Dec. 7.—*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.*
Eph. i. 11.

To whom does the apostle here refer? Unquestionably to the Lord Jesus; for what is there we have not in him? When it is said, "In whom we have obtained an inheritance," the meaning is, by whom. It comes entirely by him: he procured all for us

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on the cross, and bestows all upon us from the throne; he “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and makes us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” and we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This is true; but we think it does not reach the full meaning of the expression, “In whom we have obtained an inheritance.” The apostle refers to our union with Christ. We must be *in* him, in order to obtain the blessing. There is safety in a refuge, but we must be in it in order to enjoy security. There is sap in a tree, and the branch partakes of it; but then it must be in it. If it be separated from the tree, it derives no nourishment from it. This leads us to remark, concerning the Christian’s union with Christ, of which the Scripture speaks so much, that it is *twofold*,—visible and vital. There is a great distinction between these. Persons may be professedly in him and yet be unfruitful and perish. But all his own people are vitally united to him. They are united by the Holy Spirit, and by a living faith, so that they are one with him. It is only those, therefore, who are *vitally* united to Christ,—not those who *merely profess* his name, but those who are vitally united to him,—that can use these words, “In whom we have obtained an inheritance.” And we here also see they were *persuaded of this*. They spake not of it by way of conjecture, or opinion, or as a probable thing, but as actually certain. They spake without hesitation or doubt in this matter. Not that all who are united to Christ can use this language. A child may be heir to an inheritance and not know it, from the tenderness of his years or the weakness of his age: still, he is a *real* heir. So is it with Christians, with all who are vitally united to Christ. All of them have this inheritance, though they cannot all at present speak of their interest in it without hesitation. Yea, there are some among them who write bitter things against themselves, as if they had neither part nor lot in the matter, and as if their hearts were not right in the sight of God. But though all cannot adopt this confident language, yet it may be realized; or where is the propriety of the admonition, “Prove your own selves, examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith,” “giving all diligence, make your calling and election sure”? And in numberless instances it has been actually realized. Though all do not possess this assurance, yet all desire it. This we believe is essential to grace; not the knowledge of

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it, but the desire of it. And this is attainable. So also it is *useful* and *profitable*. Oh, how will this holy, humble assurance revive the Christian! how will it wean him from the world! how will it smooth the rugged way of life and sweeten the bitter cup of affliction! how does it gild with glory the darkness of the grave! it will remove the fear of death, and make the believer "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." May we therefore always be able to say, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and with David, "Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name."

Dec. 8.—*Where I am, there shall also my servant be.*
John xii. 26.

AND this is heaven. Now, we understand this by a twofold reference,—by a reference to his *divine* nature, and by a reference to his *human* nature. If he referred to his human nature only, he was not there when he spake these words. But his ascension was near. He said, "The hour is come that the Son of man shall be glorified." It was near; it was certain as if it had already taken place. He therefore viewed it as present, and said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." If he referred to his divine nature, he was already there when he thus spake. He said, therefore, to the Jews, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," who was actually there then. There is no inconsistency in this. It is expressive of a grand promise to believers of union and communion with, the Saviour,—a promise of their entering into the same state, place, and enjoyment, and having the same employment too. It is a description of heaven. One essential part of heaven will be the *presence of the Saviour*, for that indeed constitutes heaven. Our Saviour, therefore, said to the thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And, said the apostle, "Absent from the body and present with the Lord." It was Paul's attraction. This made him say, "I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "Better" than being bound? "Better" than fighting with beasts at Ephesus? "Better" than having the sentence of death passed on himself? Oh, no; that was not his meaning; but it was "far better" than all the service of God below, than all

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the Sabbaths, than all the sacraments, than all the “communion of saints.” “I long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” And does not this imply a state of immediate consciousness? Otherwise, the apostle would have preferred holding intercourse with his Saviour here, being employed in his blessed service,—instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the vicious, and proclaiming his word. Would he not have preferred all this to ages of senselessness in the grave? It is in vain to say that these ages would seem but a moment; for we are not inquiring about how he would feel after the event, but how he would feel in the prospect of it,—and how he would feel if both were presented to him and addressed to his option. Is this an attraction to us? No man will be forced into a heaven which he dislikes, into a heaven which he cannot enjoy; and a holy heaven cannot be enjoyed but by holy persons. A spiritual heaven can only be enjoyed by spiritual people; a Christian heaven can only be hoped for by those who love Christ, and who place all their happiness in the enjoyment of his presence. Some can say, Christ is precious; he is my salvation and all my desire; it is enough for me to be where he is:—

“I cannot live contented here

Without some glimpses of thy face;
And heaven, without thy presence there,
Would be a dark and tiresome place.”

Our Saviour well knew the disposition of his people, and the estimation in which he was held by them. He well knew what would be congenial with their feelings, and he describes heaven accordingly:—“Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” If a little enjoyment of his presence in the closet, in the sanctuary, at his table, has induced us to say, “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” what will it be to be “forever with the Lord”? “In his presence there is fulness of joy,” and the enjoyment of it *then* will be pure, uninterrupted, and eternal.

Dec. 9.—*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* Jer. ix. 23, 24.

THIS prohibition shows us at once the propensity there is in man to glory in man.; it reminds us of the source of his boast, and glorying in some possession or quality of his own,—as we here see, in his wisdom, or in his might, or in his riches. Though these three articles alone are mentioned, they are very comprehensive, and are found to contain all that feeds human vanity and pride. We should always be very careful as to what we glory in, as it at once shows what we are, whether wise or foolish, whether carnal or spiritual, whether earthly or heavenly; and because of its influence, for whatever we much admire, value, and commend will operate so as to convert the mind into its own nature. And whether the subject be virtuous or base, or noble or object, this will be the result. If it be little, it will contract the mind; if base, it will degrade it; if noble, it will elevate it; if sacred, it will sanctify it. In what, then, it may be asked, should we glory? Let us turn to the children of light; let us look at the heirs of salvation; let us appeal to the Scriptures of truth. What is the language of the evangelical prophet when predicting—the coming reign of the Messiah? “In his name,” says he, “shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” They shall not only be justified, but they “shall glory” in him. And in what part, so to speak, are they to glory? Not only in his grandeur, but in his love; not in his throne, but in his cross; according to the language of the Apostle Paul, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Here we see in what this eminent servant of Christ gloried. It was not in his parts as a man, nor in his attainments as a scholar, nor in his privileges as a Jew, nor in his strictness as a Pharisee, nor in his freedom as a Roman, nor in his usefulness as a minister, nor in his gifts and achievements as an apostle. Nay, he rejects the thought,

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and by a kind of oath exclaims, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dec. 10.—*Be clothed with humility.* 1 Pet. v. 5.

HOWEVER grace may have distinguished and enriched its possessors, if they have an inheritance now, they know they were poor enough once; if now they are clothed with the garments of salvation, they know that once they were naked and in a state of utter spiritual destitution; if they are now rich, they have been "made rich by the blood of Christ," for they were once "far off;" if they are now pardoned, they were once condemned; if they are now renewed in the spirit of their minds, they were once carnally-minded. Christians, therefore, above all others, should not be proud, but humble. Hence says the prophet to the Jews, "Look to the rock from whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye were digged." And Christians should not only be humble, but *grateful*, calling daily upon their soul, and all that is within them, to bless and praise God's holy name. There are three dresses mentioned in Scripture in which Christians appear to great advantage; and it may be difficult to determine which becomes them best. One of these is the dress here mentioned by Peter,—the dress of humility. And another is what Jeremiah calls the "garments of praise," in which also the Christian looks very fair and comely; for, as David says, "praise is comely;" it is becoming in us to be thankful, for we cannot appear to greater advantage than in these garments of praise, and in being "clothed with humility." Arrayed in these, we shall "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." But there is still another dress in which the Christian appears to advantage, and that is *zeal*. Isaiah speaks of putting on "zeal as a cloak,"—a beautiful garment. Oh, how well a Christian looks in this, when he is not only humble, and thankful in his own soul, but when he is concerned that others may partake with him,—when he invites them, when he calls upon them, to come forward and hear what God has done for his soul! Oh, may we be distinguished more and more by it, and say, with the first Christians, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Dec. 11.—*The glory which shall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii. 18.

HERE we have *the glory of the future state contrasted with the present state of suffering.* “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* which shall be revealed in us.” And all this is spoken of with hope and confidence. Let us not overlook the words which the Holy Ghost useth, for they are words of wisdom as well as of kindness. “Glory.” In other places heaven is called a rest:—“There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” And it is very desirable to be freed from evil. Those who are in bondage, how they desire freedom! and those in pain, how they desire ease! But it is not only called “rest,” but frequently “an inheritance.” “Ye are not yet come to the inheritance which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” This inheritance is immensely valuable. But glory is something more. The radical meaning of glory is brilliancy or brightness; but this is too childish an idea. The second meaning is *excellency displayed*: and heaven will display every kind of excellency. There will be *natural* excellence,—the *place* will be excellent; *social* excellence,—the *company* will be excellent; *intellectual* excellence,—the *knowledge* will be excellent; we read of “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;” *spiritual* excellence,—our holiness will be complete, and in our measure and degree, we shall be glorious in holiness. The employment will be glorious; the enjoyment will be glorious; the state, whatever view we may take of it, will be glorious. Then this is *to be* revealed. Peter speaks of it as a future discovery. It is prepared from the foundation of the world, and taken possession of in our name, when Christ arose and “ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us.” But now it is concealed. “Your life,” says the apostle, “is hid with Christ in God.” How is it hid? and from whom is it hid? It is hid from the world; but the meaning of the apostle is this:—it is hidden from Christians themselves in a great measure. They are indeed informed of it, for if they were not they could not desire it. But, after all that, the Scriptures have said, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Who can tell what new powers of mind may break forth and display themselves when we have thrown off the burden of the flesh? We have no medium by which to view it, no image by which ade-

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quately to express it, no vision with which we could bear the full disclosure of it now. The light would be too much for the eye, the melody too much for the ear; and that weight of glory would break down our poor weak frame now, for flesh and blood can no more comprehend it than it can inherit the kingdom of God. No, it is to be revealed. It will be revealed. Then all the believers' privileges will be known, all their grandeur will be seen, and the Saviour in all his charms will be beheld by their admiring eyes. Then every thing that perplexes us now will be explained; then in his light shall we see light. This glory that is to be revealed in us will be a glory to all the human race. It will be a glory even to the wicked for their conviction and confusion. "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kingdoms of the earth shall wail because of him." Thus it is with Christians even here. The Saviour is not only revealed to them, but in them. It is the apostle's own expression:—"It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." So it is with Christians now: they not only hear of Christ, but receive him. Hence he is not only with them but in them, and in them the hope of glory. They are not, therefore, only witnesses of his grace, but the subjects of it. So when his glory shall be revealed, they will not only be partakers, but it will be realized in them in all their powers, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe. But all this is known and appropriated. Paul speaks with confidence, and says, "The glory that shall be revealed in *us*." Those, therefore, who are authorized to use this language, must be a very blessed people. "Yea, happy the people who are in such a case."

Dec. 12.—*The death of the cross*. Phil. ii. 8.

THE cross was the most scandalous of things, and crucifixion was the death of slaves and of the vilest of malefactors. The death of the cross was, therefore, as infamous as it was cruel and degrading. Crucifixion not being with us a punishment, the cross is not reckoned so execrable as it was considered by those among whom the apostle laboured. To them it had connected with it the same degradation as the words gibbet and gallows have with us. And what would you think of a man who resolved

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only to glory in a gibbet or a gallows? The word cross sometimes means the mortification of sin in us, or what we endure for our adherence to our Lord and Saviour, in a way of reproach and persecution. Therefore he said to his disciples, "If any man will become my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." But observe, this is ours, not his. Again, the cross commonly means the instrument upon which the Saviour expired; and, among the Roman Catholics, pieces of wood have been sold as parts of his cross, enough to fill a hundred timber-yards. The apostle, therefore, by the cross, does not mean the crucifix; but, as by a figure of speech we use the cup for its contents, and the sword for war, so the apostle by "the cross" means the death of Christ, and all the sufferings the Saviour sustained and which he endured for us. Let us notice, concerning the cross of Christ, *its importance*. Of this importance we now know but only in part. We know not how far this importance extends. But there are two things which we are here authorized to observe. In this—the cross of Christ—the glory of God is peculiarly displayed. Here his glory shines forth in harmony with all the perfections of his nature. Here mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Here, indeed, is "glory to God in the highest." Here principalities and powers come to "learn by the church the manifold wisdom of God;" and as for angels, they "desire to look into these things. "It is *infinitely beneficial*. It is beneficial as the confirmation of his doctrine; and he sealed his witness unto the truth with his blood. It is beneficial, also, as it affords us an example. "He suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should tread in his steps." It is beneficial for us as an atonement. Thus, we read, "He once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God;" "He hath made reconciliation for sin by his death;" "He hath made peace by the blood of his cross." Now, therefore, as regards believers, the law has no condemnation, affliction has no curse, and death has no sting. "He hath abolished death." How? By his doctrine and example only, or principally? No, but by his mediation; by his dying for us and rising again; by his suffering not only for our good, but in our stead,—as our Surety, Substitute, Ransom, and Sacrifice. And, lastly, It is beneficial as the source of our sanctification as well as of our justification:—"He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us

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from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Dec. 13.—*When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John iii. 2.

AND thus the likeness secures the vision, and not the vision the likeness. In the manner in which he expresses himself, many have supposed the former to be a consequence of the latter,—that we shall be made like him by seeing him as he is. But what change will take place in the Christian *after* he sees him? The one is mentioned here, not as the consequence, but as the proof. We shall be like him; and, as an evidence of it, we shall see him as he is, which we could not do unless we had been made *previously* like him. The word “for” is frequently used not as a cause but as evidential. Thus, we say, “Spring is come, for the birds are singing.” The singing of the birds does not bring the spring, but shows that it is come. Our blessed Saviour uses the word when referring to the solemnities of the last day. He says to those on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was a-hungered, and ye gave me meat.” Well, the greatest favour the Saviour could ask for his disciples while upon earth was, that they might be with him where he was, to behold his glory. Many followed him to see him. The Greeks said, “Sirs, we would see Jesus.” Zaccheus ran before the multitude and climbed up into a sycamore-tree in order to behold him, for he was to pass that way. Perhaps we have all sometimes been ready to envy those who saw him, heard him, and were familiar with him, while here. Well, Christians,—

“Well, we shall quickly pass the night
To the fair coasts of perfect light;
Then shall our joyful senses rove
O’er the dear object of our love.”

We naturally wish to see persons of unparalleled greatness and mental capacity.

“Oh that those lips had language! life has pass’d
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine; thine own sweet smile I see,—
The same that oft in childhood solaced me.”

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Well, all the "sons of God" shall "see the King in his beauty." We have often seen him in his works, in his word, and in his ordinances. But we shall see him as he is, in the very nature in which he was born, in which he suffered and died. We have some precious views of him now by faith. But we shall not alway's depend upon testimony, nor upon his own testimony concerning himself. *No, we shall see him as he is.* When Simeon viewed him as a babe merely, he looked at him, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." When the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to see the wisdom of Solomon, she said, "It was a true report I heard in mine own land: howbeit, I believed not the words until I came and mine own eyes had seen it; and behold, the one-half had not been told me." What then will it be with regard to the disciples of Christ, when they shall "be like him, and shall see him as he is"? This was the conviction and apprehension of John and his fellow-disciples. They knew this; and, notwithstanding their ignorance of other things, they knew that they should "see him as he is." And they knew it, not only as a truth to be believed, but also to be appropriated, so that they could apply it to themselves.

Dec. 14.—We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as lie is. 1 John iii. 2.

THIS knowledge of appropriation is most desirable. It has been possessed by ordinary Christians without number And cannot we too say, with John, "We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren"? The grand inquiry, therefore, is, whether this will be our blessedness; whether this destination will be our own. We have often been told that we should exercise candour in religion, because we all hope for the same heaven, which thing indeed is very false. All hope for a heaven, but all do not hope for the same heaven. No; the heaven that many are hoping for is not the heaven here referred to by the Apostle John,—a heaven arising from the likeness, vision, and presence of the blessed Saviour. We should not fail to observe the words which immediately follow our motto:—"And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Alas, there are many who will not find this blessed state

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and abode of the righteous. Of all the passions, none are so soothing as hope; and nothing is so dreadful as the disappointment of it, especially when confidence has been great, and the object to be realized is great also. Solomon says, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Therefore, let us ever remember the words of our Saviour, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We cannot have treasure in heaven unless our hearts are there also. Those, therefore, who have this hope, should highly prize it, make use of it and employ it continually. Let us call to mind the words of Watts:—

"A hope so much divine
 May trials well endure;
 May purge our souls from sense and sin,
 As Christ our Lord is pure;"

How supporting is this assurance of hope! Oh, how it can sweeten the bitter cup of life, and soothe the mind under the heaviest trials and disappointments! How it can illuminate the gloom and light up the valley of the shadow of death! It was fabulously said by one of old, that "if a man walked by a myrtle walking-staff, he would never be weary." Let us take the staff of the gospel in our hand and hold it fast, and we shall not grow weary in our journey to heaven. Yea, "we shall run and not be weary, and walk and not faint." But if the valley be unattractive, and if even Jordan rolls between, let us ever remember that there—

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
 Stand, drest in living green;
 "There everlasting spring abides,
 And never-withering flowers."

Oh, may we, when we come to die, realize this, and then we shall say, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." Time flies, life diminishes, and we shall soon be in the condition of the mariner who leaves his native land,—as the vessel advances, the land disappears; but our condition in this respect is infinitely more important. Time is rapidly passing away, and we shall soon leap into the stream that will bear us away to the tribunal of Jehovah. Oh to have a well-grounded hope of interest in that dear Saviour, a hope full of immortality!—to have the full assurance of hope, and to be enabled to say, with David, as we look forward, "As for

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me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness;" and with John, "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Dec. 15.—*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Titus ii. 14.

IN the work of redemption we see the evil of sin infinitely displayed. It is there we find the most powerful motives to holiness and obedience. It is there that faith beholds her bleeding Saviour and wipes her tears away. It is there that hope lifts up its head and smiles again. It is there that holy love and zeal animate the heart, and burn as with a live coal from the altar. It is there we "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is there even reason leads us to conclude that, "if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that those who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." We must therefore always remember that our Saviour's death is not only beneficial as an example, but it is also infinitely meritorious and efficacious as an atonement. We must not only view it as putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, but as obtaining the Spirit of Jesus Christ; thus, we sing,—

"Tis by the merit of his death

Our souls are cleansed from sin;

'Tis by his interceding breath

The Spirit dwells within."

So, therefore, says the apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." How important, then, appears the death of Christ! If any thing more were necessary in illustration of it, we could mention two things. The one is the vastness of the sufferings from which we are delivered, and the other is the vastness of the blessings we derive from it. Here we are not only fed, but feasted; we are not only supplied, but enriched,—not only have life, but have it more abundantly. Here we are

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raised up above the state of Adam in Paradise, or even of angels in glory. And with us, also, myriads upon myriads will be the humble partakers of these benefits, and will enjoy an eternity of honour and of happiness.

“Oh, the sweet wonders of the cross
 Where God the Saviour loved and died;
 Her noblest life my spirit draws
 From his dear wounds and bleeding side.”

Dec. 16.—*The word of the Lord is tried.* 2 Sam. xxii. 31.

EVERY thing truly excellent and valuable admits of counterfeit; therefore, to determine the genuineness and value of a thing we bring it to the touchstone. Thus, silver and gold are tried in the fire. Experience signifies a knowledge derived from trial, and is, contrary to theory, founded on facts, not on conjecture. There is a knowledge which necessarily precedes faith, for how can we believe that of which we know nothing? but there is a knowledge which follows faith, of which the apostle, in referring to his experience, says, “I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Let us apply this to the case before us. The word of the Lord comes to us with a peculiar recommendation: it comes to us as a tried word; it has been tried now for nearly six thousand years. It has been tried by millions. Numbers now in heaven have tried it, and numbers now in hell, and numbers living upon earth. It was tried by our first parents in the garden of Eden. They yielded to the temptation, and tried the truth of the Lord; and they soon found, in the corruption of their blood, in the mortality of their bodies, in the loss of communion with God, in their expulsion from Paradise, that the word of the Lord is true. How did the Jews try it! How they mocked the messengers of God that came to them with promises if they would believe and obey, and with fearful predictions if they continued to rebel against God! And did they not rebel? and have not the predictions been verified in their becoming a reproach, and a by-word, and a proverb, and a hissing among all the nations of the earth? and can we see a Jew at this very day without being reminded that the word of the Lord is true and faithful altogether? We may take another view of this, and

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refer to the enemies of the church of Christ. There have been enemies who have used fraud and force in order to destroy Christianity; but they have not been able to do this, even by their combined efforts; and we learn the folly of suffering our hearts to tremble for the ark of God, seeing its destruction is impossible. "For God is not a man, that he should repent." Eventually, every thing that opposeth the truth shall be destroyed. At his coming it shall be said, Babylon is fallen! Amen. The Lord hasten it in his time. It has been tried by the servants of God: many of them are now bearing their testimony to its faithfulness. Before they ever made the trial, they read that it was good to draw near to God, that the way of the Lord was strength to the upright; and they have tried it since, and can bear their testimony to the truth as well as to the grace of all this, and can say to others,—

"O ye despairing sinners, come,
And trust upon the Lord."

Dec. 17.—*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii. 18.

LET us consider the comparison here made by the apostle. The one state so far transcends the other, that it is, properly speaking, a contrast here rather than a comparison; and this will appear in two things. First, As to the *duration* of it. The sacred writers laboured for expressions to describe the brevity of the saints' suffering-period. They called it "a season." They tell us the saints shall suffer persecution ten days; they call it an hour, yea, they call it a moment, and even a *small* moment:—"For a small moment have I forsaken thee." But suppose now that Christians should be chastened every morning and tried every evening all through life! What is life itself but "a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away"? What but as "a dream when one awaketh"? Can we compare this small moment—this light affliction, which is but for a moment—with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? Can we compare this momentary suffering with "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," where there is no danger of foes, no possibility

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of decay?—where they die no more,—where death itself is dead? Can we compare it with the language of Isaiah, “The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended”? Then, Secondly, With regard to the *degree* as well as the duration. This too is contrast rather than comparison. It is impossible that one of our trials should make us as miserable as the others should render us happy. Our sufferings, the Christian’s sufferings, however severe, have their alleviations, and our grateful minds ought to dwell upon this much more than they do. The apostle says, “As these sufferings for Christ abound, so our consolations also abound by Christ.” And can we say of our losses, that we can retain no one thing, hut that all is taken away? And, besides all this, what compensation God affords us in the midst of our trials! as it is said in Ezekiel, “Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.” So David, when he saw all was destroyed at Ziklag, “encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” And we should remember this,—that “the Lord stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.” “The glory to be revealed,” our poet thus describes:—

“Full bliss is bliss divine, and this *is* bliss.”

Our cup will be entirely filled, up to the very brim, and there will be no mixture whatever in it. No, there will be no want unsupplied, no hope unaccomplished; no, we shall no more say, “I am sick.” All tears shall be wiped away. What comparison, therefore, is there between the sufferings of this present time in duration and degree, and the glory that is to be revealed in us? But we have one thing more. Observe the *person making this relative estimate*: it is Paul. “I reckon;” and there never was a person so qualified to judge as he. We see, then, that he had two peculiar qualifications, yea, two exclusive advantages, in making this assertion. First, He was inspired; he spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; and his inspiration preserved him from any possibility of mistake or error. We know, therefore, his witness is true. Then, Secondly, He had much personal experience. It will be readily admitted that he knew well from experience what the sufferings of this present time were. He was a sufferer for Christ’s sake. Of his sufferings for the

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Redeemer's cause he speaks in one place thus:—"For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." He knew also something of the *glory* that is to be revealed, in a manner which no other human being ever did. So then we see he was qualified more than any other person, both from personal knowledge and experience, as well as being inspired; therefore he could say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

Dec. 18.—*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Gal. vi. 14.

WE may here observe how the apostle regarded the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus: he gloried in it. Now, glory supposes the realization or appropriation of some excellence; then, also, it is satisfaction issuing in delight, and triumph, and rapture. Oh that we were like-minded with the Apostle Paul! for, if we were,—if we could "glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,"—there are ways enough in which it might be expressed and manifested. If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall "rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh." We shall make it the subject of our choice with regard to preachers; we shall choose such a one who dwells much on the cross of Christ, and prefer their labours to those of others, however inferior they may be as to talent or as to manner; "for what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall think of it with feelings of pleasure, saying, with the Psalmist, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with thee." "My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember thee upon my bed," O my dying Saviour, "and meditate upon thee in the night-watches." Thoughts are the first-born offspring of the mind, and in a Christian we shall find them clinging to the cross, as the bees cling around the hive,—and for the very same reason, for there is the honey.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend."

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There the Christian feels his highest delight to be. If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall speak of it, not by constraint, but willingly; not formally, but from affection; not with indifference, but out of the abundance of the heart. If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall endeavour to bring others to our own views and feelings:—

“Then shall we tell to sinners round
What a dear Saviour we have found,—
Point them to his redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God.”

If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be comforted by it under all our losses, depressions, and privations. We well know that trials urge us to repair to that which we consider our treasure or our portion; and we solace ourselves in this when we have nothing else to cheer and encourage us. Finally, If we glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be willing to make sacrifices for it. We know what sacrifices Paul made. Ah, what a sufferer was he! and yet he says, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Yes, Paul could say, “For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.”

Dec. 19.—*Go to, now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.* James iv. 13–15.

“THEY that *will* be rich,” says the apostle, “fall into temptation and snares, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” There are some whose spirit and conduct seem to say they will be rich whether God wills it or not. How much we see of this in social life! Hear the language of James in this Scripture. Now, here we have an unsanctified tradesman: he must carry on business to advantage. He seems to have no desire to monopolize or to run down his rival. No; his aim seems only to get gain in a lawful way. And

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what harm is there in this? It is the "hand of the diligent that maketh rich." And "he that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." But perhaps it may be found that he is avaricious, that he is ambitious; and that it is not a mere subsistence he wants, but an abundance,—not a competency, but splendour; and he is carried away by the pride of life. In his endeavours to accomplish his wishes and aims he will compass sea and land, not perhaps reflecting upon the evils of a roving disposition, and without weighing well the remark of Solomon, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." This has been the case with many. But what is the great truth here? Why, that *God is not present to his mind*. He never *sought* him before or during his undertaking; he never prayed, with the Psalmist, "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;" "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel;" or entreated God to choose his inheritance for him. And how should he expect the divine direction and blessing? These words'—*I will* do this and that—are too big for a mortal, regardless of Him upon whom every thing depends. He is to succeed, he is to live through another year, regardless of sickness and accidents, and of all those changes to which mortals are exposed. Alas! all such boasting: is vain.

Dec. 20.—*The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

Gal. vi. 14.

ONCE, in the experience of the apostle, the world looked very fair and very inviting; but now it appeared to him like a dead thing. Once he valued it much, and depended upon it too confidently; now it is regarded by him as a corpse of a crucified malefactor,—as mean, worthless, infectious, corrupt, and unfit for any kind of reliance. Now, says he, "I am crucified unto the world." I was once alive to it; it was my portion to enjoy, it was my idol to worship, it was my prince to serve. Now I am dead to it, so as to be insensible of impression from it: neither its threatenings nor its allurements can influence me. Such is the change that is to take place in every Christian, in reference to the things of this world. Does he then resign all the enjoyments of life? Does he retire to a cell of filth, and keep a

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death's-head before him upon the table? Does he abandon his civil concerns? Does he flee from society? No; this would not be fighting the good fight of faith, but declining the contest. No; he fills up every relation in life, he discharges every duty, not as a slave, but as an obedient child. No; "he labours, working with his own hands;" and he "abides with God in his calling." And whether on board a ship, in the market, or in the field, he is still serving God. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God. He is in the world, but not of it. The world cannot engage his affections now. His affections are "set on things above, not on things on the earth." Now his "conversation is in heaven, whence also he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change his vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body." The world's fame cannot affect him now, for he is seeking the honour that cometh from God only. Its frowns cannot intimidate him, nor its smiles entice him. He feels now no relish for its sinful enjoyments, since he has found higher, more substantial and refreshing good. He now says, in the beautiful lines of Newton,—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue;

It has no charms for me:

Once I admired its trifles too,

But grace hath set me free."

A man may, in a measure and degree, be dead to the world from his natural powers, from the infirmities and decays of the body, and from the stings of disappointment. And sometimes, indeed, we find persons complaining of everybody and of every thing. Thus, a man being jaded with frequent disappointment from the world may find a temporary disrelish for its pursuits and enjoyments, but, unless the heart be changed, he feels a repetition of similar desires after this present world, till the lamp of life is extinguished, and death closes the scene of his mortal career. But it is otherwise with the heirs of immortality. Possessing the same means and resources with others, yet they voluntarily forego the gratifications of earth, finding them not only unfriendly, but insipid, and not only insipid, but unsuitable to the nature and wants of an immortal spirit. They resemble the patriarchs, of whom it is said, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country; and truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had

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opportunity to have *returned*." *Why do they not?* Because they have something better in view. Because they seek a better country, even a heavenly; and "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." There are some who leave the world as Lot's wife left Sodom, for her heart was there still; therefore she looked back, and became a pillar of salt. Some leave the world as the Jews left Egypt, but they turned back in their hearts after the flesh-pots and the leeks they had left behind them.

Dec. 21.—*If ye will inquire, inquire ye.* Isa. xxi. 12.

"WISDOM," says Solomon, "is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and, with all thy getting, get understanding." One mode of obtaining this is by inquiry; for all knowledge is originally external, and we fetch it in by application and labour. "Through desire, a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." A very superior man once said, "Much of the little knowledge I possess has been obtained by my never being above asking questions of others," adding that there is hardly any one but knows something which we do not, or know not so well. If it be inquired, Of whom are we to ask? we say, first and supremely of *God himself* And how encouraging is the assurance,—“If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Next, we consult his *inspired servants*, the prophets and the apostles. Then we ask *good men*, who in his light see light, and are led by his Spirit into all truth. And surely the old should not be overlooked. "With the aged is wisdom, and in length of days is understanding." "The old, indeed," says Elihu, "are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment;" yet "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." And we should naturally conclude that the young would pay some deference to those who have gone before them, and occasionally, at least, ask their advice; and they would, if young men were not "wise in their own conceit." Yea, we are sent for information even to the *brute creation*:—"Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee, and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee." Therefore says Solomon, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which, having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth

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her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." And says the Saviour, "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Yea, we are sent even to the *material* creation:—"Go speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee." "Behold the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;" "Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand." Yea, *time* is to be one of our preceptors, and time, though senseless in itself, is full of lessons of importance. While we should readily give the future to providence, and the present to duty,—so that "whatsoever our hands find to do, we may do it with our might,"—yet we should never forget that "God also requires that which is past," and he requires us to remember it. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what is in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no." But how is this to be done without consulting former times and seasons?

Dec. 22.—*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*

Ps. xvii. 15.

WE are assured, by infallible authority, that "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." It would be very easy to exemplify this pre-eminence in numberless instances, but we shall only remark on one,—namely, his *prospects*. The sinner, when he looks back, finds a thousand things filling his mind and conscience with pain and remorse. And what pleasure can he feel if he looks forward? He sees death and eternity approaching, and feels unprepared for their approach. All his relief must arise from his banishing these subjects from his thoughts; and this is no easy matter. But this putting the evil day far off is not putting it away. *Come it must*. And so also the Christian feels sorrow in the review and in the remembrance of the days of his unregeneracy, and of his deficiencies since he has known God, or, rather, been known of him. But then he sorrows after a godly sort, and he feels more pleasure in his sorrow than he ever found in all the pleasures of sin or dissipations of folly. It was "a time of love," when God passed by, and said unto him,

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“Live;” and the thought of the means he employed to turn his feet into the way of peace, and the various dispensations which so often surpassed and surprised his hope, fills him “with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” which strangers intermeddle not with. Oh, what a scene opens before him beyond this vale of tears! The proverb says, “All is well that ends well.” It is the *end* that proves, all, that finishes all, and that crowns all. We are far from denying that there are very many *present* advantages in religion; but now in regard to the Christian, in all his service, in all his sacrifice, in all his sorrowing, we should reckon that the sufferings and enjoyments of [^]this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. The believer has now much in hand, but more in hope; he has much in possession, but more in reversion. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

Dec. 23.—*For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* James iv. 14.

If life be compared to things so evanescent, let us seek the “wisdom which cometh from above,” that we may well and wisely consider our latter end. How short is human life, if we fix the period! Place it at threescore years and ten; place it even at fourscore years; “It is soon cut off, and we fly away.” But how uncertain is our reaching this period! at what age, in what place, in what condition, in what employment, have not men died! How many of our companions and neighbours have been unexpectedly and prematurely carried down to the dust! Let none, therefore, rely on youth or strength, for “surely every man at his best estate is vanity.” Seeing that we are hastening to the grave, let us consider what is true wisdom, what the one proper and rational part which creatures circumstanced as we are have to act. Is it not to prefer the soul to the body, and eternity to time? Is it not to make the concern of the apostle supremely and constantly our own,—“That I may win Christ and be found in him”? This subject should teach us, also, that “Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, to do it with all our might,” and to do it inline-

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diately, for there is “no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither we are going.” While we delay, our opportunities may have fled, never to be recalled; while we linger, we ourselves may be gone, and every possibility of usefulness be cut off. The season for doing good with us is limited to this short and equally uncertain duration. In consequence of this, what an inestimable value attaches to the present hour! Let us therefore “redeem the time, because the days are evil.” To the Christian earth has one privilege above heaven; it is the privilege of beneficence. They who are now in joy and felicity would be ready, were it the will of God, to descend from their glory and re-enter the body and traverse again this vale of tears, to be able to do what we have now an opportunity of doing,—of “serving our generation by the will of God.” Of our Saviour it is said, He went about doing good. He said, “I must work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh, when no man can work;” but at last he said, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do, and now I am no more in the world: holy Father, I come to thee.” And such, too, is the removal that awaits all his followers. We shall soon be no more in the world; how soon it is impossible to determine. But with some, from the infirmities of nature and the course of years, the event cannot be very remote. With many, “the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” “Now is their salvation nearer than when they believed.” O Thou in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Dec. 24.—*But now they desire a better country.* Heb. xi. 16.

THESE words refer to the patriarchs who lived in a remote period of the world’s history. Yet, if we are Christians, we, like them, are “strangers and pilgrims upon earth;” and, so far as their religion is concerned, we are commanded to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. With regard to their desire, here are two things for us to observe. First, *The preference for the country.* It is obvious this language is metaphorical, and refers to a state of future blessedness; and we may notice six exemplifications of it. It is “a better country.” First, *Locally.* We do not view heaven principally as a place,

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but as a state. Still, however, it is a place: and what a place! What a place of beauty and blessedness was Eden! and earth has some delightful spots where God displays the perfection of his nature, and yields us richly all things to enjoy. But, alas! earth has storms as well as sunshine, winter as well as spring, sickness as well as health, night as well as day, death as well as life. There is enough to entitle it to the character of a "vale of tears." But there is no night, no thorns and briers, no ravenous beasts to go up thereon, no disease, no death; for "there shall be no more curse." It is *corporeally* better. What a body must that be which is destined for the Christian! Compared with that, the apostle calls this a "vile body." It is to be fashioned like unto the Saviour's glorious body. It is *intellectually* better. God's people are now said to be made "wise unto salvation." "Now we know in part; there shall we know even as we are known." It is *morally* better. Holiness is the beauty of the soul and the glory of God; and though here the believer is made a partaker of the divine nature, yet he finds he is not perfect in holiness. When he "would do good, evil is present with him." And therefore he sings so joyously now,—

"There I shall see his face,
And never, never sin."

There I shall never grieve his Spirit whom I infinitely love, nor pierce that dear bosom on which I now lean; but I shall be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." It is *socially* better. Much of our present happiness is derived from society, and much of our present misery is also from the same source. We may judge a little of the happiness of the social life in glory by two classes of characters with whom we hope to be privileged to enjoy sweet fellowship,—those who have shone in the world as the Lord's faithful servants, the world's best benefactors, and also the company of those of the saints whom we personally loved. We pay dearly for our social enjoyments, but some of them are worth all the tax they impose upon us; but when we meet again, there will be no separation, nothing to mar or to chill us in our embraces, but both shall be forever with the Lord. It is *durably* better. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Laurels here soon wither on the brow of the conqueror; riches, when amassed,

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make to themselves wings and flee away; nature itself decays; but there

“Everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”

But, after all, its excellency and pre-eminence doth not yet appear, for we can find nothing in the world wherewith to compare it. But, Secondly, Observe the *peculiarity of the desire*. It is not natural to man. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” The Christian’s desires flow from conviction; they say, “Then shall I be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” What the Christian thus really desires bears three relations. It is right in its objects, in its nature, and in its expectation. Yes; to all believers heaven is infinitely desirable, and of these the apostle speaks as well as of patriarchs; and they shall not desire it in vain. Now they have some Pisgah views of it; now they appropriate it by faith; now they get some earnest and foretastes of it; but they shall ere long go up and take full possession of their promised and reserved inheritance in this “better country.”

Dec. 25.—*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* Rom. vi. 6.

THE renewal of the mind begins by faith in a crucified Saviour. Oh, says the believer, it was the sight of the cross that first allured my soul from earthly things, and taught me to esteem as dross the mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

“All joy to the believer! He can speak,
Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.
Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hoped but in thy righteousness divine.”

Oh, what a change, says the believer, has the grace of God wrought in me!—what new scenes have opened before my mind. Oh, what new feelings do I possess!—what new fears, what new aversions, what new desires:—“Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Oh, that sight of the cross, how it melted my frozen heart, how it composed my troubled conscience, how it satisfied my longing desires, how it

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ended my rovings and sanctified my soul! Yes, and from that period sin is rendered odious and become embittered; for, as Cowper says,—

“The cross once seen
Is death to every sin.”

“Knowing this,” says the apostle, “that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” And we may also observe that, as the work commences in the cross, so it is carried on in the same way. The more our spirits are imbued with the truths connected with the cross of Christ, the more frequent and sweet will be the communings we shall have with him; and the more dead we become to this present evil world, the more shall we “grow in grace and— in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is important, therefore, for us to inquire how we stand affected towards this vain world. There are some, and we hail them, who have said,—

“Farewell, world; thy gold is dross,
Now I’ve seen my Saviour’s cross;
Jesus died to set me free
From the world, and sin, and thee.”

But, as to others, the world is their all in all. They cannot determine upon any thing without first asking, “What will the world think of me? What will people say of me?” What is this world, to which they are so alive? Is it not “vanity and vexation of spirit”? Are not its votaries ashamed to be enslaved by it? What has it done for them? Oh that they would leave it before they are eventually ruined by it! Oh that, with Moses, they would “choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;” and that, with David, they would pray unto God, “Save me from the men of this world, who have their portion in this life.”. Oh that, when we are called to leave it, we may be able to say, with him; “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Dec. 26.—*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*
John i. 14.

THIS intimates to us the Saviour’s intercourse and his sociableness. All great minds love and seek solitude. The Saviour loved

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and often sought retirement, and, had he pleased himself, he would have more frequently retired from public view; but he never refused the company of those who sought his presence, and therefore he did not refuse to be a guest when the Pharisee invited him to his table; nor did he refuse to be a guest at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. It was on this occasion he wrought a notable miracle, turning the water into wine. This condescension and grace drew forth the maliciousness of his enemies; hence the allegation, This man "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil;" that is, he is melancholy and a recluse. The Son of man came eating and drinking; there was no excess, but "simple living" according to the common mode of life; and they say, He is "a wine-bibber,—a friend of publicans and sinners." This was a foul and scandalous reproach. But, though he did not love men's sins, he loved their souls; and was concerned for their salvation. All through life he was never actuated by the spirit of the Pharisee, saying, "Stand by; come not near me; I am holier than thou." He never indulged in the abominations of rnonasticism. He never said, Touch not, taste not, handle not. He knew that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, and sanctified by the word of God and prayer." His prayer to his heavenly Father was, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." He was in the world, but not of it. We, also, are to be in the world, but not of it. His religion, if we understand it properly, calls us at once out of the world as well as into it. Out of the world as to its spirit and principles and maxims, and what the apostle calls "the course of the world;" but into it as a field of action and a sphere of usefulness,—if there are any tried ones to be relieved—if any hungry to be fed—if any naked to be clothed, or sick to be healed—if there are the ignorant and uninformed to be instructed, the vicious to be reclaimed, or the lost to be saved.

Dec. 27.—Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. Ps. xxxvii. 37.

THE death of a Christian is peculiarly worthy attention. In how many instances has it proved the means of awaking the care-

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less, and quickening those who have believed through grace! How often has the death of a minister exemplified and confirmed and enforced his public exhortations and warnings, so that he has in the chamber of affliction accomplished what he failed of doing in the sanctuary! A parent on his death-bed, surrounded by his weeping family, has been heard to purpose, when, like Mr. Bolton, he has thus solemnly addressed them:—"See that none of you meet me in an unconverted state at the day of judgment." And who can forget the tender and affectionate solicitude of a dying mother, as, with heaven in her tearful eye, she gazes for the last time, and, with her last trembling embrace, she bids her beloved children farewell? And there are instances in which the husband, who refused to hear the word, though urged by the tenderest affection and tearful solicitude, when the desire of his eyes has been removed, is now won by her pious conversation, made sacred by death, and resolves, while he builds a monument to her memory, to retrace his steps,—alas! now to be taken alone. And the death of the Christian is not only an object of interest to friends and relations, but to all who may witness it. All they do and say is regarded now with peculiar attention; all is stamped with sincerity and importance; all that is heard and seen is final. The world, with all its interesting associations, connections, and anxieties, is passing away. But the Christian has in his heart and eye enduring substance. The outward man perishes, but the inward man is renewed; heart and flesh are failing him, but God is the strength of his heart and his portion forever. Mrs. Savage says, "The people of the world never speak well of it at parting. But the Christian can bear his testimony to the excellency and pleasantness of wisdom's ways;" and he recommends them to others from experience, and says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walks of life."

Here a glory has been shed, an influence felt, that has impressed the careless, confirmed the undecided, emboldened the timid, and

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induced even the skeptic to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

Dec. 28.—*Ash now of the days that are past.* Deut. iv. 32.

THERE is something very solemn in the thought of "days that are past,"—past never to return, while their moral results remain forever as subjects of future responsibility. And who has not to reckon upon days that are past? for time, like tide, stays for no man; and wherever we have been, and however engaged, this has been passing on. And can we think of it and not say, with Job, "When a few more years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return," or without praying, with the Psalmist, "Make me to know mine, end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am"? Here, indeed, is a great variety. What past days have some experienced! What fine days! How full of means and opportunities, and the excitements of conscience, and the strivings of the Spirit of God! How many of these past days have we had! And if with some the days of their years be threescore and ten, with the possibility (for it is hardly a probability) that they should reach fourscore years, what invasions have now been made upon their ranks, and how well does it become us all to say, "There is but a step between us and death"! Others are in the middle of their days, and there are many who are not advanced so far; yet all have had their days that are past: yes, the young die as well as the old; and "in the midst of life we are in death." What says the poet?—

"Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven,
And how they might have home more welcome news."

Let us then summon in our past days, and ask them what they have to say. First, Let us ask them what they have to say concerning the *world*. Mrs. Savage has strikingly remarked, "I never knew any of the people of the world praise it at parting." Nor need we wonder at this: we should wonder if they did. They have been too much in it, and seen too much of it,—they have been too much deceived by it,—to recommend it to others, when dying, from their own history or experience. Hear what Solomon has said, who had tried it in every favourable form:

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—“Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity and vexation of spirit;” “vanity” if they succeed, and “vexation of spirit” if they are disappointed; and to one of these all are liable. Oh, what a cheat, what a miserable painted cheat, is the world! Surely this is enough to induce us to forsake it, and to comply with the admonition of the Wise Man:—“Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding.” Secondly, Let us “ask the days that are past” what they have to say concerning *ourselves*. Have they not shown us many things with which we were formerly unacquainted, and filled us with surprise and regret? Ah! how many convictions have been violated, how many resolutions broken! In moments of solitude, when the imagination has given place to the remonstrances of truth, many have reflected, prayed, and vowed; but in company they have again yielded to temptation, and their iniquities, like the wind, have carried them away. Has not life been very unlike the picture our early imagination drew? We said, I shall be very happy when I have attained such an end; when I have formed such a connection; when I have gained such an appointment; or when I have filled such an office. Have not our dependencies often proved broken reeds,—not only unable to sustain our hopes, but which have “pierced us through with many sorrows”? And yet, further, will not these “days that are past” also tell us something else? Will not they tell us that life has been at least a checkered scene? Let us review them again, especially under a sense of our unworthiness of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which our heavenly Father has shown us. If we have been in the wilderness, have we not found grace in the sanctuary? Have we not had there the fiery, cloudy pillar to guide us, the manna to sustain us, and the waters from the rock to refresh us? Can we refuse to say, “Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life”?

Dec. 29.—*Ask now of the days that are past.* Deut. iv. 32.

LET us inquire what these “days that are past” have to say concerning THE SCRIPTURES. First, Have they not tended to *confirm* them? We must have been very unobservant indeed if they have not greatly established our faith in revelation. As we

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have heard, so have we seen, that the Scripture does not belie human nature, though it describes it as most depraved. It indeed represents men everywhere as fallen, guilty, corrupt, and alienated from the life of God. It tells us that “the way of transgressors is hard,” and we have seen this in actual instances. It tells us that “there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty;” and we have seen those who have laid up what they ought to have laid out in the cause of God and the poor, exercised with losses, or wretched in their connections, or declining in their health, or depressed in their spirits, unfollowed by regret when they have died, and leaving no memories to embalm their names when they are gone. On the other hand, we have never known a public-spirited Christian in our lives, who was not happy or in some way peculiarly blessed. “They shall prosper that love thee.” The Scripture tells us that “the prosperity of fools shall destroy them;” and how often have we observed how “their table has become a snare, and that which would have been for their welfare a trap”! We have seen persons rising in life, and, as riches multiplied, they have set their hearts on them, and begun to give up the Lord’s day, the sanctuary, and one religious ordinance after another, concerned only to make provision for the flesh.—The Scripture says, “Is any man afflicted? let him pray.” And have we not found prayer our best relief in trouble, both by its answers and by its exercises? “Oh,” says God, “that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy salvation as the waves of the sea.” And have we not found it true that “the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways”? On the other hand, the Scripture has told us that “they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;” and have we not gained fresh succours when we have been thus engaged? The Scripture has told us that “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy;” and have we not found our humble and penitential hours our very best seasons? Secondly, Have not the “days that are past” tended also to *explain them*? The Scripture explains providence, and providence explains Scripture.’ How often have we heard Christians say, “I never saw so much force and beauty in such a passage until I was brought into that affliction, or exercised with that dispensation”! “When the Puritans fled from persecution in

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this country to America, at first they depended much upon supplies from the mother-country. A company of them having gone down to the sea-shore, after looking anxiously for a vessel which was to bring them corn, and being disappointed, hunger induced them to search among the pebbles; and they soon found a kind of muscle, which they partook of, and found that it was wholesome and nutritious. One day, after they had made a hearty meal of this kind, a venerable old man stood up, and, returning thanks, blessed God that he had given them "to suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasure hid in the sand,"—words which occur in the blessing of Zebulun, but which none of them had observed before, and perhaps never would but for this. Thirdly, Have not "the days that are past" tended to *endear* them? Good men have always been fond of their Bibles; but when have they felt most attached to them? If we ask David, he will tell us, "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me;" "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction;" "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

Dec. 30.—*I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* Ps. cxxx. 5.

NOTHING can be more interesting than to see a good man calm and patient while in a very trying and distracted condition. Such a one is a witness for God, by showing the reality, efficiency, and excellency of the religion he professes; David, therefore, in his troubles, had recourse to God. Waiting includes not only seeking, but expecting; and waiting—patiently waiting—for the Lord implies that God does not always immediately come to release and relieve his people. "While he is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness," yet he may not come to our relief at the time we expected him, and therefore we feel disappointed. But he is not bound to observe our prescribed rules; and he must know, in his infinite wisdom, that we have often very improperly fixed the times and seasons for him to manifest himself. We may always depend upon him, and that in his own good time and way he will listen to our prayer and interfere on our behalf. He hath said, "He that believeth shall not make haste." If the Lord appears to tarry, we are to wait

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for him. The husbandman does not go out and murmur at the clouds, or blame the weather; he well knows that there must be a season between sowing and reaping, and that the various influences of nature, the rough and the smooth, the sunshine and the storm, all operate and combine to produce the final result; therefore he "hath long patience for it." "Be ye," says the apostle, "therefore patient." It is frequently very trying to flesh and blood to wait for God, and it is necessary for great patience to be exercised by us. But let us ever remember we have no claim upon God; and let us also think how long we have kept him waiting for us, how long he stood knocking at the door of our hearts, week after week and month after month, before we arose up and opened unto him. Then it becomes us to exercise full confidence in God, and to feel assured that he will fulfil all his promises; that his delays will be advantageous, and that his is the best time; therefore it is said, "Blessed are all they that wait for him." They are blessed, for they are preserved from those painful reflections that others feel who disobey him, and who charge him foolishly and unkindly, before he explains himself; they are preserved from having recourse to sinful and improper expedients to extricate themselves from present difficulties, and to obtain relief. Had some Christians let God alone, (so to speak,) to bring about his purposes in his own time and way, how many stripes and how many storms in providence had they escaped! In nothing can we honour God more than by confiding in him. And God says, "Them that honour me I will honour."

Dec. 31.—*He hath done all things well.* Mark vii. 37.

THE particular providence of God attends the Christian in all his concerns. He goes on board a vessel, launching on the ocean of life; he gives God the command of the helm. Thus we are enjoined to "commit all our ways unto the Lord," and to trust also in him; and we are at the same time assured that he will bring it to pass, for when we "commit our works unto the Lord, the thoughts of our hearts are established." Thus, also, we are enjoined to "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our request be made known unto God." It is when we obey the apostle's injunction that we feel the "peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keeping

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our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” “The way of the Lord is perfect;” but we may be left to charge him foolishly, and in so doing we only display our ignorance. In the world, in the nation, in the church, in the family, and with regard to the concerns of every individual, he is not only doing all things, but doing all things well. Do we believe this? There is a vast difference between the reality, and our believing and acknowledging it. And what is it that keeps us from acknowledging that in all things and in all dispensations his providence is doing all things well? First, Because we judge too *selfishly*. We are not detached individuals; we are placed in connection with others. What is not good for us may be good for them; and what is not good for one part may be good for the whole. Then, Secondly, We judge too *carinally*. What is not good for our pleasure may be good for our profit; our temporal losses maybe our spiritual gains; we may be “chastened with the righteous, that we may not be condemned with the wicked.” Here is cause for praise and gratitude. But, oh, how we yield to flesh and blood! When every thing is easy and prosperous, there is no obscurity then. No; but let a change take place, let affliction fall upon us; then, with a sad heart and sorrowful countenance, we immediately exclaim, “His way is in the sea, and his path in deep waters;” as if it were, after all, so wonderfully mysterious that he should suffer us to be afflicted; as if God were less wise and righteous and good in the dark than in the light, in a stormy day than in a calm one. Jacob said, “All these things are against me;” but, if he had waited a little while longer, he might have said, with the apostle, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Hence the apostle enjoins upon believers that they “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.”

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan his work in vain:
 God is his own interpreter,
 And he will make it plain.”

THE END.