

watery cloud in relation to the sun, the phenomenon must often have been visible before,—though after all we do not know those previous dispositions—the words do not necessarily mean any more than that what was already a familiar sight should now and henceforth be a sign. In giving or appointing seals on other occasions, things already existing were taken: the materials were not created of new. So it was with the sacramental bread and wine. So with Joshua's stones of memorial. Ver. 16,—“The bow shall be in the cloud; I will look upon it (says God) that I may remember.” How graciously assuring! Again, “The bow shall be in the cloud;” he repeats it and repeats it—“This is the token of the covenant which I have established between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth—and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (ver. 15). How does the security thus given increase in interest, when the stability of this covenant with Noah, can be with God's own warrant applied to illustrate the stability of the better covenant, and made a pledge of the divine faithfulness for the accomplishment of its greater promises. So does he declare by Isaiah (chap. liv.), “This is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

#### PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT.

The practical lessons of our subject are—

1. That we ought to see God in the seasons; and beware of abusing the constancy of nature, by resting in second causes, or giving to nature's laws the glory

that belongs to Him who ordained them. How many under the name of nature practically worship the idol of necessity or chance! Strange that He who gives us all our blessings, should be hidden from us, or unacknowledged, just because the flow of his goodness is so constant, his mercies so innumerable! Many walk God's earth, and drink every hour at the streams of his benignity, yet scarcely invoke his blessing on the bounties they partake of—scarcely name the Giver but to curse by that holy name, or to bless by it, in as irreverent accents and as meaningless. To the devout man, who walks with God, every mercy is seen to come from God's hand. Where others at best discern a power which they fear rather than love, he recognizes the faithfulness and goodness of a covenant God and Father. So,

2. We are taught by the example of Noah, what are the real conditions of earthly enjoyment, or to whom it is that the blessings of the seasons are blessings indeed. The fact of Noah's acceptance first, ere the promise of the text was given to him, instructs us that an interest in the Saviour's sacrifice, or acceptance in the Beloved, gives the real title to the temporal as well as spiritual good of the covenant. Otherwise we may indeed share in the fruits of the field—in the blessings brought forth by sun and moon. Day and night, and summer and winter, may pass us over us in their grateful alternations. But are we contented to be merely monuments of God's long-suffering, and to remain strangers to his love? shall we be in the world, only as the place of Divine forbearance, from which we must soon pass away, relinquishing for ever the mercies we have abused, and with no foundation secured for the time to come? What avails earthly good if alone? The seasons shall not revolve for ever. The sun shall no always shine. The promise to Noah secures, at