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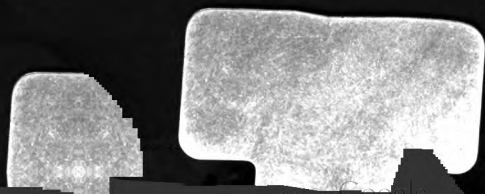
BOW OF PROMISE



THE
BELIEVER'S EXPECTATIONS



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BOW OF PROMISE.

BOW OF PROMISE

OR

THE SURE GROUNDS OF THE BELIEVER'S EXPECTATIONS

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE FAITHFUL WITNESS," "FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS "

ETC.

"His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

GRIFFITH, FARRAN, OKEDEN, & WELSH

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INTRODUCTION.

THE promises of God, whether they relate to the believer in his individual capacity, or to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, are all faithful and true. Men may fail to accomplish their word, either from a change of feeling, or a change of circumstances; but in Him with whom we have to do, there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Such being the case, we may safely venture to repose the most implicit confidence in His declarations. Being yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and having never been forfeited yet, to cherish any misgiving as to their veracity, involves no small amount of guilt, and casts the foulest indignity upon the divine character. "He that believeth not God, hath made Him

a liar ;" while those who take Him simply at His word, and receive His testimony with unhesitating acquiescence, set their seal to the fact that God is true.

As without faith it is impossible to please Him, so in the absence of this grace we cannot realize how exceeding great and precious are His promises. But to those in whom confidence has its perfect work, these divine assurances will impart the richest consolation ; and they will be more esteemed by them than gold, yea, than much fine gold, and be found sweeter than the droppings of the honeycomb.

May each reader of this little work have the sublime satisfaction of feeling that he can claim these promises as his chosen heritage ! If so, he will never be left without guidance in the time of perplexity, or support in the hour of need. Living upon them from day to day, he cannot fail to have his energies quickened, and his spiritual strength renewed ; and though the powers of nature may decline, he will be enabled notwithstanding " to bring forth fruit in old age ;" he will even then " be

fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright, and that there is no unfaithfulness in Him."

Should the following pages contribute, under the divine blessing, to produce such results, they will not have been written in vain. To lend a helping hand to the believer in his heavenward career, and encourage him to hold on amid the difficulties and dangers of the way, will be regarded by the author as a high privilege and abundant reward. Any aid, however feeble, will doubtless be welcomed by those who mourn over the slow progress they have made, and will feel that they have constant need to be reminded of the apostolic injunction—"And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises."

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BOW OF PROMISE.

1ST DAY OF MONTH.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Gen. iii. 15.

The Dawn of Day. IT was a fearful and most disastrous day when man rebelled against his Maker, "a day of trouble and distress, a day of gloominess and desolation, a day of clouds and thick darkness. The wise man calls upon us "to remember the days of darkness, for they are many;" but this was the darkest in the whole course of our chequered history. In the garden of Eden we behold a world lying in ruins; we there find all generations involved in one tremendous catastrophe; countless myriads, in the

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person of our common progenitor, exposed to everlasting perdition. Angels were, doubtless, spectators of that rash deed which formed man's first disobedience, and what must their feelings have been on the occasion? The character of Him whose command had been violated, and whose high authority had been set at nought, they well knew. They had received the most convincing and impressive demonstrations that "He was a God of truth, and without iniquity, and that just and right was he." The results of sinning against him they had witnessed in what befel so many of their own brethren, who kept not their first estate; and now here is man leaving his first estate in like manner; and since both are involved in similar rebellion, will not the one as well as the other incur those dread consequences which are its appropriate reward?

A dark day it was truly—a day in which the sun might have been clothed in sack-

cloth, and all creation covered with mourning. And dark it would have continued had not mercy rejoiced against, and triumphed over judgment. It is well for us that such a triumph was achieved, and that from amidst a denser gloom than that of Egypt a cheering ray appeared. It was in the cool of the evening that it first shone, when the coming Deliverer was announced as the seed of the woman, by whom the great adversary was to be bruised, and who was to dispossess him of his spoil. Thus while Paradise in many of its features is associated with all that is sad and sorrowful, yet in quitting its bowers we are enabled joyfully to exclaim, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." In that early promise, the germ of all succeeding ones, the dawn first broke upon our miserable condition.

The scriptures abound with proofs that judgment is God's strange work, and that he has no pleasure in our destruction. A striking one is furnished

on this occasion, not merely in the general announcement to which we have referred, but as regards the time when it was given. No sooner had He convicted our first parents of their guilt, than he uttered the promise, even before the impending penalty was denounced. Not merely in the midst of wrath did he remember mercy, but by the precedence which he gave in the order of time to its proclamation, did he shew how greatly he delights in its exercise.

Reader! what should be thy feelings while contemplating this early disclosure of God's gracious purposes towards our fallen race? Great, indeed, and surpassingly wonderful has his merciful kindness been towards us.

“He saw us ruin'd in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all;
He saved us from our lost estate,—
His loving kindness, oh! how great.”

Should we not, therefore, call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to magnify and bless his adorable name?

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever.”



2ND DAY.

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."—Mal. iv. 2.

The Sun of Righteousness. To watch the rising sun, especially on a clear morning, is an interesting employment. There are unmistakable signs, as we turn our eyes to the East, that he is about leaving his chamber, to gladden the face of nature with smiles, and clothe her in robes of beauty. That golden tinge, becoming every moment more vivid; that deep crimson glow casting its streaks higher and higher; the fleecy clouds dispersing one after another, and a mild and mellowed lustre diffused all around; until at length the bright orb appears in majestic splendour, filling, as he ascends, the whole vault of heaven with his glorious effulgence. Well might the fallen angel, in the poet's representation, address such an

object as being with surpassing glory crowned, and looking down from his lofty dominions as the god of this lower world.

Such is the striking emblem employed to set forth the advent of our blessed Redeemer. In the promise given in Eden we have the break of day, and in the subsequent predictions of the prophets, those bright beams which showed that the morning was advancing; but at length the Sun of righteousness arose, and it was with healing in his wings. With strong desire was the event looked forward to by the Old Testament church; many prophets and righteous men longed to behold the day of his appearing, but they died without the sight. After many revolving centuries, however, the fulness of time came, and the long-expected Saviour was born. Yonder just and devout man in the temple, aged Simeon, has him in his arms; and from the song of praise which he utters, not merely does the strength of his faith,

and the warmth of his gratitude, and the intensity of his joy appear, but also the clearness of his views as to the nature and design of his mission. Pressing the adorable Babe to his bosom he exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." As we pass on to the commencement of his public ministry, we find him beyond Jordan, on the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali; and there we have fulfilled what was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." And if we accompany him in his onward career we shall hear him, meek and lowly though he was, bearing no mean testimony to his own character and

claims. More than once did he utter those words of majesty, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." This was verily the voice of a God, and not of a man; if of a mere man, we must say that it savoured of the most arrogant presumption.

We must not forget, however, that this great Sun of the spiritual firmament had to suffer a fearful eclipse; it had to be shrouded in midnight darkness, and be immersed in the shadow of death. Let us turn aside and see this strange sight—the Son of God wounded, bleeding, dying, reviled by men, tormented by devils, abandoned even by the Eternal Father. Never before had he seen a frown on that face of divine benignity, but it is now marked in all its features with righteous indignation. The darkness which covered the shuddering earth, and the astonished heavens, was as the radiance of mid-day compared with

the thick gloom which encompassed the soul of the great Surety in that solemn hour. So dense was the cloud that not a single ray of loving kindness shone through it. He was surrounded by the horrors of the burning pit, and endured not a few of the elements which constitute the misery of those who dwell where God has forgotten to be gracious, and where his mercy is clean gone for ever. He had borne much previously, and he had borne it alone. He was alone in the conflict in the wilderness when exposed to the fiery assaults of Satan; he was alone in Gethsemane, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful; and yet he could say "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." But now that last refuge fails him, and he cries out in inconceivable anguish, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

At the same time, never did such streams of light beam forth as from that mountain summit, though enve-

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 19

loped in so dismal a gloom. "The earth was dark," as one observes, "and the heavens shone not, but from the cross there came a moral effulgence which irradiated both earth and heaven beyond the brightness of a thousand suns." It was "the noontide of everlasting love, the meridian splendour of eternal mercy."

Great Sun of righteousness ! let thy heavenly beams shine into my dark and benighted soul. Be thou the glory of my brightest days, and the comfort of my gloomiest nights. Of thee I can truly say,

"In darkest shades if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun.

The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss;
While Jesus shows his heart is mine,
And whispers, I am his."

3RD DAY.

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."—Zech. xii. 10.

Spirit of This is a truly precious
Supplication. promise, the subject referred to being not only important in itself, but especially so as the pledge of those abundant blessings which follow in its train. There cannot be a more favourable indication of the approaching prosperity of the Christian cause, than the existence of a large measure of the spirit of grace and supplication among God's people. As John Foster remarks, "It is altogether visionary to expect an unusual success of religious concerns unless there are unusual omens. Now a most emphatic spirit of prayer would undoubtedly be such an omen. The individual who should solemnly determine to try its last possible efficacy might find himself become a most

prevailing agent in his little sphere; and if the whole, or the greater number of the disciples of Christianity were with an earnest, unalterable resolution to combine that Heaven should not withhold one single influence which the very utmost efforts of conspiring and persevering supplication could obtain, it would be a sure sign that the revolution of the world was at hand." This testimony is doubtless true. A spirit of prayer will be found, like John the Baptist, to be the forerunner of the Saviour's coming in his kingdom; it will be the harbinger of the King of Zion, marching with glory and majesty in his gospel chariot, from conquering still to conquer.

In the past history of the church there has been no scene so truly wonderful as that which transpired on the day of Pentecost. But it is important for us to inquire, By what was that gracious visitation preceded? In the account given of the upper chamber where the disciples were assembled.

together, we are furnished with a reply. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." We have here the secret of what followed—the freemasonry of the whole affair. This verse, short though it be, contains much that is worthy of being seriously pondered. In the first place, it was an exercise in which they all joined—men and women alike, rich and poor together, not one of the entire company being away. Oh, when shall we have prayer meetings after that fashion? In the second place, it was with one accord that their petitions were presented. They agreed touching what they should ask, and it was done for them of their Father which was in heaven. And, in the third place, they persevered. "These all *continued* with one accord;" far from restraining prayer before God, their firm resolve was, "We will not let thee go, unless thou bless us." And blest they were, even with showers of

blessings. It is thus clearly shewn that, before we can expect Pentecostal success, there must be Pentecostal supplication as the indispensable preliminary.

Gracious God! pour out a large measure of this spirit upon thy people. Let it not be their reproach now, as it was with those of old, of whom thy servant declares, that there were none who called upon thy name, or that stirred up himself to take hold of thee. Age after age hast thou challenged thy church to put thy power, thy generosity, thy faithfulness to the test, saying, "Prove me now herewith, and see if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, so that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Oh, dispose us to comply with so wondrous and gracious a call, and we shall surely find it to be according to thy word. May all thy watchmen, whom thou hast set upon thy gates, and with them the entire sacramental band of thine elect, keep

not silence, but give thee no rest until
thou shalt establish and make Jeru-
salem a praise in the whole earth.

4TH DAY.

"Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. i. 8.

Confirming It is not for a certain season that God confirms
Grace. his people, but unto the end; and what that end is we are not left in any doubt, being assured that it has special reference to the day of the Lord Jesus. At that blessed period the Christian will be presented faultless before him with exceeding joy; and of himself and all his redeemed family he will then say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

There are many considerations which clearly shew that the true Israel of God shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and that they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. One is, the union which subsists between Christ and his people. "Because I live," was his language, "ye

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shall live also." Other connections may be broken, but this is indissoluble. That between a building and its foundation may be severed by the angry elements; as was the case when the offspring of the pious patriarch were feasting together. The union between husband and wife may be dissolved by a writing of divorcement. The head can be separated from the members by the axe of the executioner, or the sword of the assassin. And the union between soul and body has no power to withstand the assault of the king of terrors. But that which exists between Christ and his people, nothing can break. Neither the raging storm, nor the bill of divorce, nor the battle-axe, nor the sword, nor can death itself separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How conclusive, again, is the consideration furnished by those striking words, in which we are told, "that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

If those glorious beings did not believe the encouraging truth to which we are referring, it is difficult to account for the feelings with which such an event is regarded by them. On the contrary supposition their language would be, That sinner, having been brought to true repentance, is now a child of God, and an heir of heaven; but whether he will ever reach this happy place is a matter of great uncertainty. Were we fully assured that he would arrive here, we might now tune our harps; but since we have been already disappointed, and the infernal legions are now triumphing over some at whose conversion we once rejoiced, it is better to wait and see how he holds out, lest our joy should be too sanguine, and our praises prove to be premature.

But is it likely that there has been joy in heaven over any who are now among the lost in hell? Is it likely that to one real subject of salvation, the taunting question will ever be put

by devils and damned spirits, as he enters their gloomy realms, "Art thou also become like unto us?" Oh, what triumph would such an occasion afford to the hellish hosts; what a gleam of gladness would it diffuse through their dark and desolate abodes! But it cannot be. Not until the glory of the divine perfections are tarnished; not until the strength of the Omnipotent shall decay; not until the oath of Jehovah shall be broken; not until the great Unchangeable shall suffer his faithfulness to fail, will such an event take place.

Thou fearful saint, take courage. Commit the keeping of thy soul to Him in well doing, who is the faithful Creator; thou wilt then be kept by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Look to that blessed Saviour, who having loved his own which were in the world, loved them unto the end; and whose gracious words are, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto

them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Take down, then, thy harp from the willows, and sing in joyful strains of those purposes which are immutable, and that covenant mercy which for ever endures.

"The work which his goodness began,
The arm of his strength will complete;
His promise is yea and amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make him his purpose forego,
Nor sever my soul from his love.
My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress'd on his heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

5TH DAY.

"And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."
—2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

The Acceptable Sacrifice. UPON yielding ourselves unto God, the most momentous issues depend. Our happiness in life, our security in death, our acquittal on the day of judgment, our blessedness throughout an endless eternity—all turn upon this one act. To exaggerate its importance is, therefore, altogether impossible.

Such being the case, it becomes us to give earnest heed to the various directions contained in the scriptures as to the spirit and manner in which this surrender should be made. The apostle exhorts us "to present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God," which he adds, "is our reasonable service." The words have evident reference to the offerings which formed

so prominent a part of the Mosaic dispensation. But now animal sacrifices have ceased ; the lamb is no longer led to the slaughter ; the blood of the appointed victims is not carried into the holiest of all. Since the great oblation was offered on the cross, all these have been done away. If, however, we have not to present our bullocks, and goats, and calves of a year old, still there is something which we have to offer, even ourselves. And should any be disposed to regard the ancient sacrifices as devoid of meaning and significance—as they might be regarded if their typical character be lost sight of—yet this living sacrifice all must acknowledge to be pre-eminently right and reasonable.

It is recorded of Bellarmine, one of the champions of the Romish Church, that in his last will he bequeathed the half of his soul to the Virgin Mary, and the other half to Jesus Christ. But however such a division might accord with the principles of that corrupt

community, it is in direct opposition to the disclosures of divine truth. He who says, "My son, give me thine heart," will not be satisfied with a portion of it; he claims it entire from all his creatures.

"Our God requireth a whole heart or none,
And yet he will accept a broken one."

Whole it must be in the sense of nothing being reserved; and broken and contrite it should be, when it is considered how his righteous authority has been disowned, and that homage given to other objects which was due to him alone. How was it with Ephraim when he cried, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God?" It was then that he bemoaned himself, that he repented and smote upon his thigh, and that he was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because he had borne the reproach of his youth.

Reader! such is the spirit in which thou shouldest give thyself unto God. Filled with godly sorrow, it becomes

thee to return to Him from whom thou hast so long and so foolishly wandered. Oh! approach the footstool of his mercy, and thou canst not do so better than by adopting the words of the church of old, whose penitential cry was "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." And if thou art anxious to know what reception thou art likely to meet with, listen to the assurance, so wonderful, so decisive, so encouraging, which is here given, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

6TH DAY.

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."—Ps. cxxx. 4.

The Gracious Announcement. THE forgiveness which is with God is distinguished by many blessed properties, the contemplation of which cannot fail to be cheering to those who mourn over their manifold transgressions and shortcomings. The first is its fulness—it embraces all sins, be their number ever so great, and their nature ever so enormous. Hence the ardent strains of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." Such was the ground of his gratitude, the source of his triumphant joy. And, surely, to have all our diseases healed, and all our iniquities forgiven, should call forth our incessant and profoundest praise. In another passage it is stated, "And I will cleanse

them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me: and it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth." Thus the great Jehovah, the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, appears to glory in his pardoning mercy as one of the brightest jewels of his crown, and through the exercise of it he represents himself as attracting the special admiration and homage of mankind. Well might the church exclaim, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."

Another quality equally precious, is its freeness. It is not on account of any worthiness in us that God pardons, but it is entirely owing to his own boundless love and mercy. "In whom

we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And in full harmony with this statement of the apostle are those wonderful words, "I, even I, am he which blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Above all, it is final and irreversible. Let the reader listen to that glorious clause in the new covenant, where it is said, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." In this declaration there is something exceedingly important and conclusive. It is not merely a promise, though a promise from Him who cannot lie would be sufficient, but it is a promise in a covenant form. There is, therefore, the most ample security that forgiveness being once granted will never be withdrawn. In many other passages is the same cheering truth set forth. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our trans-

gressions from us." Not until these opposite points meet together, and become one, shall the sins of believers rise against them to their condemnation. Again, "He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Were the loftiest mountains hurled into the fathomless ocean, all trace of them would instantly disappear. And such is the expressive image employed to shew the perpetuity of pardoning mercy. Hence it is added, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Such is divine forgiveness in its unlimited extent, its unmerited freeness, and its everlasting efficacy. Possessing these features, it is worthy of God to bestow, and suitable for sinful creatures to receive. Less than this would not have met the peculiar exigences of our case. Had it not included every sin, we must have

suffered the vengeance due to those which remained uncanceled, and even then we would be lost for ever. Had it not been free, we could never have possessed it, since, as total bankrupts, we had nothing wherewith to purchase it, or qualify ourselves for its reception. And had it not been perpetual, we should be under constant apprehension lest, after its bestowment, it might be again recalled, on account of our present unworthiness, or our future failings.

“Great God of wonders, all thy ways
Are matchless, glorious, and divine;
But the bright glories of thy grace
Beyond thine other wonders shine.
Who is a pardoning God like thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free!”

7TH DAY.

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."—Is. lxxv. 24.

The Hearer THE Divine Being is represented in his word, of Prayer. not merely as a sin-forgiving, but as a prayer-answering God. "O thou that hearest prayer," was the language of the Psalmist, "unto thee shall all flesh come." On innumerable occasions he found in his own experience, that it was not a vain thing to call upon God, and make supplication unto the Almighty.

In addition to the general fact that He hears and answers prayer, we are furnished with many striking instances of the promptitude with which the requests of the righteous have been granted. Of such one of the most memorable occurred in connection with the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea. The haughty monarch of

Egypt resolved to pursue them, after having previously permitted their departure from his territories. In a spirit of proud confidence and boasting arrogance, he exclaimed, "I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them." His armed legions make their appearance while the various tribes were encamped upon the margin of the sea. A more critical position than that in which they were now placed cannot be conceived. Every way of escape seemed closed against them. Before them was the sea; on the right hand and on the left they were hemmed in by lofty mountains; while behind them, at their very heels, was Pharaoh and his hostile army. If they advanced, it would only be to find a grave in the caves of the ocean; if they turned back, it would be to fall into the hands of their pursuers. In such a terrible crisis, what were they to do? Moses, their divinely-appointed

leader, instantly perceived that only one alternative remained; seeing that vain was the help of man, he called upon the name of the Lord, and that with an earnestness such as the urgency of the occasion could not fail to inspire. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" was the divine language, shewing that they were strong, fervent, wrestling cries which he uttered. The sequel shews that they were not unavailing. An answer instantly came. For their deliverer God himself appeared. The bosom of the pathless sea was cleft by his mighty power. The stricken waters recoiled upon themselves on either side. The Israelites passed over in safety, while the legions of Pharaoh were destroyed. Blown upon by the blast of Jehovah's nostrils, they perished; in one promiscuous mass they sank like lead in the mighty waters. "So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord; while those who love thy name shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

But this is only one instance out of many. We might refer to Elijah on Mount Carmel when contending with the priests of Baal. No sooner did he call than the answer came; the fire from heaven at once descended, and the sacrifice was at once consumed. So with the apostles when they prayed that the Lord would grant to them that with all boldness they might speak his word; the place where they were assembled was instantly shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Now God is still as powerful to help, and as prompt to deliver, as in the days of old. Not that we are authorized to expect invariably an instant answer to our supplications. He will now grant immediate succour if it be required; but should his interposition be postponed for a while, let us not doubt either his ability or faithfulness, but continue to pray and not faint. It may be his gracious purpose to prove us, as Jesus did the woman of Canaan;

but however our faith and patience may be tried, let us be fully assured that "he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain."

"He frees the souls condemned to death,
And when his saints complain ;
It sha'n't be said that praying breath
Was ever spent in vain.

This shall be known when we are dead,
And left on long record ;
That ages yet unborn may read,
And trust and praise the Lord."

8TH DAY.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."—Rom. viii 15.

Deliverance from Bondage. THE sinner when first awakened to the concerns of his soul, is generally in a state of bondage to the law, similar to that in which the Jews were kept, of whom it is said, that "being ignorant of God's righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteousness, not having submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." He is now convinced of his awful neglect of those duties which he owed to his Maker, and under the influence of such a feeling he attempts, with considerable earnestness, to discharge the various obligations which devolve upon him. By so doing, he expects to recommend himself to the divine favour, and as the result of such a course he expects to be brought to the

DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE. 45

enjoyment of that peace which he is so anxious to realize. But in this he is sorely disappointed; his gloomy apprehensions, instead of being removed, continue to oppress him, and rest seems to be even farther off than ever. Such, as he now perceives, are the requirements of God's law that he fails day after day to meet them; and every fresh discovery he makes of its extent and spirituality only serves to augment his fears. It is no wonder that he is deeply depressed, and that a feeling of utter helplessness steals over him, which, if not removed, will lead to a state of settled despondency on the one hand, or of confirmed indifference on the other.

But let such an individual, who has been attempting to carry out the injunction, "Do this, and thou shalt live," have the gospel method of deliverance set before him. While told that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God, for by the law is the knowledge of sin,

let him also be directed to look to Him who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. Let him be informed that the Lord Jesus, by his obedience and death, did what the sinner himself could never do, and that his perfect righteousness is available for all who accept of him, and submit themselves unto him. Let him be brought to see that God is ready to receive him, not on the ground of any personal merit, but simply on account of the worthiness of the great Redeemer; that for his sake the most heinous transgressions will be forgiven, and that those who were enemies to him by wicked works shall be restored to his friendship, and adopted into his family. Being thus brought to perceive the leading peculiarity of the gospel plan, and to embrace its gracious overtures, what will be the result? The burden which had so long oppressed him will be removed; from a state of bondage he will be brought into the glorious liberty of the children

of God; and he will be enabled with undescrivable transport to say with those of old, "Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped."

"The law," as one observes, "is not now the *gate* of life, yet it has never ceased, and never shall cease, to be the *rule* of life." In this latter aspect, the liberated sinner will be brought to regard it. He will take God's statutes as his chosen heritage, and he will obey them, not in a spirit of legal servitude, but under the constraining influence of fervent love and heartfelt gratitude. His obedience being thus established on a right foundation, will be not forced, but voluntary; not gloomy, but cheerful; not careless, but diligent; not fluctuating and temporary, but constant and persevering.

Deliver me, O Lord, from that slavish fear under which so many are kept in bondage. Give me right views of thy character as God in Christ, reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing

their trespasses unto them. May I never regard thee as a frowning enemy, a tyrannical despot, a hard task-master; but as a loving Father, waiting to be gracious, and ready to forgive. O shed abroad a spirit of adoption in my heart, that I may be enabled to address thee as my God, my portion, my all in all! Then shall I serve thee in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter; not as a wearisome drudgery, but with emotions of unfeigned delight.

THE WONDROUS TRANSFORMATION. 49

9TH DAY.

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—2 Pet. iii. 13.

The Wondrous Transformation. It is not very evident whether the immediate reference of these words is to the final habitation of the redeemed when time shall be no more, or to the spiritual transformation which will be effected through the gospel previous to the general conflagration. The probability is that the apostle alludes to the latter, a view which fully accords with the general strain of his argument. This earth, he shews, together with the firmament which is stretched above it, will be dissolved; the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the heavens will pass away with a great noise. As surely as the old world was destroyed by a flood will the present world be destroyed by fire. But, antecedent to that dread scene, we look for a more blessed state of things than has been hitherto

realized; a state in which the woes of the world will be in a great measure removed, and in which righteousness will be triumphant.

The expressions employed denote the greatness and glory of the change that will be produced. As altered will the condition of things be in the mortal world, as if new heavens and a new earth were created in the natural world. Of each individual who is in Christ, we are told that he is a new creature, or a new creation; and it is only necessary for those gracious influences, whereby the sinner is converted from the error of his ways to be universally diffused, in order to bring about such a renovation as will justify the strong figure which is here used.

Many of the changes which even now take place in nature are very wonderful; such as that from the depth of winter to the loveliness of spring, and the rich luxuriance of summer. Were it possible for us to conceive of an individual who was altogether ignorant

THE WONDROUS TRANSFORMATION. 51

of the changes of the seasons, and could we suppose him to be transplanted at once from the sterility and desolation of the one, and placed in full view of some splendid prospect in the other, what would his impression be? He would imagine that he was in a new world—so great, so amazing, would be the transformation. But not less striking will be the contrast between the state of things at present, and what they will be at the blessed period which is approaching. Then the winter will be past, the rain will be over and gone, the flowers will appear on the earth, and the voice of the turtle will be heard in the land. Then the wilderness and the solitary place will be glad, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose. Then this barren and blighted earth, from which little else has sprung up hitherto but thorns and briars, will become like Eden, and all her uncultivated wastes be as the garden of the Lord. And could we, as in the case supposed, transport ourselves

to that happy era, when these representations will be realized, should we not feel as he felt, and exclaim with transporting joy and admiration, This is a new creation indeed !

But according to the other view of the passage, we are encouraged to look for new heavens and a new earth, more glorious still. The Redeemer is gone before to prepare a place of everlasting habitation for his people. There righteousness will be, not widely diffused merely, but the character of its countless inhabitants without a solitary exception. After such a spirit be it thine, O my soul, to aspire continually, inasmuch as "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

10TH DAY.

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."—Acts xxvi. 18.

Inward Sanctity. FUTURE glory is represented by the apostle as "the inheritance of the saints in light." However limited our knowledge of the heavenly world, of one thing we are fully assured, that it is a holy place, and that nothing which defileth can enter there.

It is thus indispensably requisite in order to our meetness for that blessed state, that we should now be of the number of those that are sanctified. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification;" and he wills it on the ground of its being absolutely necessary to our present well-being, and to our everlasting felicity.

Much is said by the inspired writers concerning this important work. They invariably represent it as an inward process, in contradistinction to any out-

ward peculiarity. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work *in* you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." From this it is evident that true believers are distinguished from others, not merely by some external badge, or the observance of certain prescribed ceremonies; but by an internal principle produced by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, whereby they are made a holy nation, a peculiar people, to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Another feature by which sanctification is distinguished, is its comprehensiveness or universality. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly," was the ardent breathing.

of Paul concerning his Thessalonian converts. It is true that there is much imperfection in the holiest Christian in the present life ; but still intense hatred is felt by every renewed soul to all sin, and earnest longings after entire conformity to the divine will. The aim of sanctification is the destruction of all evil ; in its opposition to the diversified depravities of our nature it makes no exception, not the least favour being shewn to any besetting infirmity. It enjoins the strict observance of all duties, even the most difficult, and that at all times, and in all places. There may be formidable obstructions in the way, yet the spiritual principle, in proportion as it prevails, is sure to have its fruit unto holiness, both in heart and life. With the Psalmist the language of every true believer will be, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes ! Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

. It is also, as the above remarks

imply, a progressive work. It is begun in regeneration, when the sinner passes from death unto life; but it is carried on gradually through various steps, and by means of various agencies. Not merely is the church at large, but each of its members is compared to an edifice, which by the supply of fresh materials receives continual increase, until the plan of the great Architect is complete. Thus all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. Its progress may be interrupted, but it will not be left unfinished; the headstone will one day be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it!"

O my soul, let it be thy great concern, first to ascertain whether this good work has been wrought within thee. Inquire with all diligence and impartiality whether thou art one of those to whom it can be said, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." If thou

last reason to conclude that such is the case, still count not thyself to have already attained, but be strenuously pressing onward, that thy progress may appear unto all.

Holy Spirit! work in me more and more both to will and to do of thine own good pleasure. Subdue every unhallowed feeling; rectify every impure motive; all that is weak establish; all that is dark, illumine; all that is grovelling, raise and support.

“Vouchsafe within my heart to dwell,
There every sinful motion quell;
Complete thy blessed work of grace,
And fit me for a happier place.”

11TH DAY.

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life."
Rev. iii. 5.

The Christian Conqueror. IT was an ancient custom for a register to be kept in each city, in which the names of all the citizens were recorded. None but those who were thus enrolled were entitled to the honours and immunities which the city had to bestow. But it was no uncommon thing for these favours to be lost; for any one who committed some serious crime against the state had his name erased, and all the advantages formerly enjoyed were forfeited. There is evident reference to this in the above promise. The true believer has his name written in heaven, and the assurance that it will not be blotted out from the book of life shews the certainty of his privileges, and the perpetuity of his bliss.

In the words, "the same shall be clothed in white raiment," there is another allusion to the usages of former times, such robes being generally worn on festive occasions. The expression sets forth three things as regards the future blessedness of the saints. The first is their purity. They have been presented before the divine presence without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. No sin now pollutes their services, and no guilt beclouds their minds. Every imperfection has vanished; over an evil heart of unbelief they no longer mourn; from the body of sin and death they are eternally delivered. And being thus perfectly holy, they cannot fail to be perfectly happy.

The high state of dignity to which they are advanced is also set forth. White robes were regarded by the Romans as a badge of honour, being often worn by their nobles and warriors when their services were publicly rewarded. But what shall we say of the

honour to be conferred upon the Christian victor? No conception of it can at present be formed; all similitudes are totally inadequate for its representation. We can only state that it is unfailing in its source, boundless in its nature, and unending in its duration.

There may likewise be allusion here to the priests who were thus attired during their ministrations in the temple. All true believers are now not merely a chosen generation and a peculiar people, but a royal priesthood. And what is the song of the heavenly hosts? "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

But all the white-robed throng above were distinguished by a special character during their earthly course. They were engaged in an arduous conflict, and from it they came off

victorious. The world in its smiles and frowns, in its pomps and pleasures, assailed them; but they manfully resisted it in all its forms, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They had also to wrestle with spiritual principalities and powers; but having taken the whole armour of God, they were enabled to withstand their wiles, and quench the fiery darts which were levelled against them. How severe, likewise, was their struggle with the evil propensities of their nature, those inward foes which war against the soul. But while they often cried with bitter anguish, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" they were yet able to thank God for giving them the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let the Christian be encouraged to fight with full determination and perseverance this good warfare; and for that end let him often think of the glorious recompense of reward which is promised to "him that overcometh."

He may be assured that in the opposition he is encountering, no strange thing has happened to him, for the same trials are endured by his brethren that are in the world. But however arduous and universal the strife may be, there is no ground for fear as to its final issue. In the language of an experienced believer, each member of the household of faith can join in saying,

“ Thus different powers within me strive,
And grace and sin by turns prevail ;
I grieve, rejoice, decline, revive,
And victory hangs in doubtful scale ;
But Jesus has his promise past,
That grace shall overcome at last.”

12TH DAY.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."—Prov. viii. 17.

Youthful Dedication. It is early piety, as a general rule, that leads to eminent piety. Nearly all the distinguished saints whose names appear with such high prominence on the pages of inspiration, and whose memories are enshrined in our hearts as a hallowed treasure, were the subjects of saving grace in the morning of their days. Among those who sought God early may be specified righteous Abel, the first fruits of that glorious harvest to which all subsequent ages have contributed—the forerunner of that numerous host which will continue to be augmented until the consummation of all things. There was Joseph, a character admired by all, who stood manfully in the face of fiery temptation, and who maintained his integrity in the no less trying time of signal pros-

perity. There was Moses, the great leader of Israel, one of the noblest specimens of sanctified humanity which the world ever witnessed, and of whom it is recorded that in the spring of life, he resolved to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. There was the son of Jesse also, that man of deep experience, of seraphic devotion, of pre-eminent faith and fervour, and whose sacred songs have been the vehicle through which the devout breathings of the righteous have ascended, through successive generations, as sweet incense to the skies. And what shall we say more? for the time would fail us to speak of Samuel who was sanctified even from his mother's womb; and Josiah, who while he was yet young began to seek after the God of David his father; and Timothy, who from a child knew the holy scriptures, as able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. These were men of

whom the world was not worthy, and there can be no doubt that their spiritual excellence was mainly owing to the fact that they consecrated the prime and promise of their existence to Him, whose they were, and whom they so faithfully served.

In his last will and testament, the celebrated Beza wrote, "I bless thee, O Lord, for many things, but especially do I bless thee that I was led at the age of sixteen, to give myself to thee and to thy service." At the close of life it was to him a source of the purest joy and the most fervent gratitude that he had been enabled, at that early age, to devote his best energies to the best of all Beings, and the best of all causes. Since his time many have acted in like manner, and never for a single moment have they regretted the choice. The regrets have all been on the other side—that the great concern was so long delayed, and the true end of life for so many precious years altogether lost sight of.

Let the youthful reader be persuaded to yield at once to the Saviour's claims. The remembrance of what he has done for our salvation ought to be an irresistible incentive to instant decision. In the striking language of a living writer we would say, "The dregs of life our offering for all this priceless love, O sinless Son of God! The palsied hand, and clouded brain, and stammering tongue, and leaden foot of age, thy trophies? God forbid!"

"When we devote our youth to God,
'Tis pleasing in his eyes;
A flower, when offer'd in the bud,
Is no vain sacrifice.

'Tis easier work if we begin
To fear the Lord betimes;
While sinners that grow old in sin,
Are harden'd in their crimes.

'Twill save you from a thousand snares,
To mind religion young;
Grace will preserve your following years,
And make your virtues strong."

13TH DAY.

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come."—Ps. cii. 13.

Revival COMING events often
of cast their shadows be-
God's Cause. fore them. As it is
in the natural, so is it
in the moral and spiritual world.
Winter, with its gloom and desolation,
never comes without sending premoni-
tory intimations of its approach. The
shortning days, the falling leaves, the
moaning winds, the decreasing tem-
perature, and the rekindling of the
cheerful fires—all these are harbingers,
preparing the way, and proclaiming
the near advent of that bleak and
barren season. So with spring in its
returning life, and summer with its
rich luxuriance, and autumn with its
ample stores. They are preceded by
certain tokens in like manner. The
budding vegetation, the flowers decking
the meadows, the blossoms covering

the trees, the humming of insects and singing of birds, bear united testimony that the winter is past, and point onward to the period when the hills will rejoice on every side, the pastures be clothed with flocks, and the valleys covered over with corn.

The question is one of special interest and importance, What are the symptoms which now present themselves in reference to the cause of Christ? Do the signs of the times foretell a period of approaching revival and prosperity, or of further declension and a deeper gloom? Are we verging upon a dark and stormy winter, or are we on the confines of a bright and smiling spring? Have we grounds for saying, concerning our Zion, that the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come, or are we driven, by what we see around us, to another and less pleasing conclusion?

But whatever be her immediate prospects—although, on the whole, we are disposed to regard them as cheering;

yet were there thick clouds gathering above the horizon, of the ultimate issue there is no room for doubt. "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion," we can say with the fullest confidence, even were we unable to add that the set time to favour her is come. If, for a season, this blessed cause will further decline and languish, yet that it will be visited again with prosperity is as sure as that Jehovah reigns over all, and that is immutable purposes cannot be frustrated. In innumerable instances has He interposed in the past history of the church, when his people have been reduced to the lowest depression; and thus man's extremity has been God's opportunity. When is the gloom of night the deepest? It is just before the break of day. When is the tide at its lowest point? It is the very instant before the swelling flood begins to rise. When is winter often the most wintry? It is immediately before the setting in of spring. Let, then, the night be dark, the tide be

low, and the winter long and drear; yet notwithstanding all, let the assurance of the captive Jews in the land of their banishment, be fully cherished by us,—“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her, yea, the set time will come.”

Such confidence, however, should not lead us to fold our arms in sloth and inactive security. He whose decree has gone forth that all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him, has also ordained that this blessed consummation will be brought about through human instrumentality. Strenuous efforts must therefore be put forth, and wrestling prayer must be ceaselessly offered. Then, when these potent agencies are combined, may we expect that He will rise up out of his holy habitation, make bare his mighty arm, and pour down his Spirit from on high. Then God, even our own God, will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

14TH DAY.

"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."—Deut. xxx. 6.

The True Circumcision. THERE are some laws which are more honoured in their breach than in their observance. But such is not the case in reference to God's law, which is emphatically declared to be "holy, just, and good." We may venture to ask, Who is a loser when it is obeyed? Who is a gainer when it is violated? Out of that divine code let any one select a single injunction which is opposed to sober reason and true self-interest.

The sum of its diversified requirements is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." On these two

commandments hang all the law and the prophets. And is it not our reasonable service to comply therewith? What happy results would follow if they were universally embodied in the spirit and conduct of men!

To these sacred precepts there is a strong repugnance in the carnal mind, and that repugnance constitutes its inability to render obedience to them. None can refuse to obey them on the ground that it is physically impossible to do so. Were a person who had lost the use of his limbs commanded to run a race; were the dumb ordered to deliver an oration, or the blind to pronounce an opinion upon the merits of a painting—in such cases there would be a natural inability, an inability which would justify non-compliance, and which, if punishment were inflicted for disobedience, would render it the most odious and unjust tyranny. But the inability of man to love God arises from the opposition of his heart: “for the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not

subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Hence the indispensable necessity of an inward change, whereby the whole bent and bias of the soul undergoes a radical transformation. And hence the blessedness of the promise, "And the Lord thy God shall circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Let this promise be fulfilled, and instead of distrust there will be confidence, and instead of repugnance there will be delight. Those who did not like to retain God in their thoughts, and whose language was, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," will then be enabled to say, "Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth we desire beside thee."

Reader! has thy heart been thus circumcised? If not, other objects rather than the ineffable Source of all bliss, are enthroned in thy affections.

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Nature, it is said, abhors a vacuum ; and what is true of the world of matter, is no less true of the world of mind. If the Lord of the temple has not possession of his own shrine, it is likely to become the resort of sordid traffickers and money-changers, and be made even a den of thieves ; and such impious intruders must be ejected before the rightful owner will return. "If any man love the world," says the apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him ;" and it is only the latter love that can expel the former.

Gracious Lord ! shed abroad thy love in my soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. Dispose this treacherous heart to choose thee as my all-sufficient portion, and to rejoice in thee as my exceeding joy. Keep me from being satisfied with any creature comforts, and may my spirit not rest until it rests in thee.

15TH DAY.

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."—Ps. xxix. 11.

Strength Renewed. ALL the promises of God are characterized by special appropriateness, being precisely adapted to the diversified circumstances of his people. Such is the case with the promise before us. Are they in an evil world, where manifold tribulations abound? They have here the assurance that the Lord will bless them with peace. Are they helpless in themselves, and thus unable to bear the sufferings to which they are exposed, to resist the temptations with which they may be assailed, and to discharge aright the various duties to which they are called? Oh! how precious is the announcement that the Lord will give strength to his people, even strength according to their day.

The latter blessing is greatly needed by the believer in life, and still more

will he need it in death. Sad, indeed, will it be to have to encounter the last enemy, if our spiritual energies are diminished; but pre-eminently blessed if our inward strength be renewed. Being strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, the believer will be enabled, not merely to meet death with safety, but with exulting joy.

On one occasion the Psalmist prayed, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." He seems to have been fixing his thoughts upon the solemn change which awaited him, and to have realized by anticipation, "the pains, and groans, and dying strife." The period appears to have been present to his mind when the cold dews of death would be standing in large drops upon his pallid brow, and when every nerve and vein might be racked and wrenched within him by the power of the grim foe. He also looked forward, probably, to the consequences by which that dread event would be attended; his

naked spirit entering the invisible world and appearing before the great tribunal, where its irreversible doom was to be decided. After having thus looked onward it was natural for him to turn his thoughts within, in order to ascertain the present state of his soul ; and it is evident that he found it far from being prepared for that which awaited him. While contrasting thus the one with the other, he was led to fall upon his bended knees, and this was the petition he offered, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."

There are many, doubtless, even of those who have some grounds to hope that they are subjects of divine grace, who have need to join in this prayer, "O spare me ;" for if this heart be renewed, it is greatly wanting in that strength which is necessary to enable me to meet the great enemy with a smiling face, and in the prospect of his approach, to say, I will fear no evil. "O spare me ;" for if the good work be

begun, very far is it from being finished. Oh! what unbelief is there to be destroyed, what carnality to be slain, what selfishness to be rooted out, what earthly-mindedness to be purged away, what cold and grovelling affections to be quickened and inflamed! Such being the case, how necessary is it for us to cry that our lives may be yet spared, in order that our strength might be invigorated and renewed!

With very different feelings is death encountered even by the people of God. It is all gloom and fearful apprehension in the case of many; and, as a general rule, it may be stated that such have lived at too great a distance from God, and been too much taken up with the things of this passing world. In consequence of this, when they come to die, their Heavenly Father has to chastise them; and he does it as earthly parents sometimes punish their children—by sending them to bed in the dark. But how different is it with the spiritual, diligent, established believer? To him

there ariseth light in the darkness, and he rejoices in hope of the glory of God, even when heart and flesh are failing. After such a departure be it thine, O my soul, earnestly to aspire, and for it let it be thy daily endeavour to be prepared!

16TH DAY.

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—Jer. xxix. 13.

The Successful Pursuit. ONE of the chief prerequisites for seeking God aright, is to feel our need of him. Through the fall man has lost God, but the saddest feature of the case is, that he is not sensible of the loss; and such being the case, he feels no regret on account of it. Other calamities, infinitely less disastrous, would fill him with unspeakable grief. The removal of the sun from the firmament, for example, is a loss that would be felt. The fearful consequences that would ensue in the absence of all light and warmth, all beauty and animation, could not fail to affect him deeply; but what would it be after all, either in itself or in its results, when compared with the loss of Him who is at once the sun and shield of his people! Were the flowing streams to fail, and

the rivers to be dried up like the summer's brook, he would mourn with a bitter lamentation; but to lose that glorious Being, who is the fountain of living waters, the source of all blessedness, both to saints and angels, causes no concern whatever. Were he to be deprived of his friends, and have the desire of his eyes taken suddenly away, his tears would flow, and he would refuse to be comforted; but to be left by Him, of whom all who are acquainted with his matchless charms, are prepared to say, "Whom have we in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that we desire beside thee?" does not produce a single pang of sorrow in his cheerless and benighted breast. The loss is unlamented because it is unfelt.

While such is the case, it is not to be expected that any effort will be put forth for its recovery. In the absence of all consciousness of want there can be no exertion made to have it supplied. But, on the other hand, what will not be done when a deep sense of need

exists? Of this we have a striking proof in the history of the patriarch Jacob. When his sons returned from Egypt, whither they had been sent to purchase corn, one of their number had to be left behind; and they were commanded to bring their younger brother with them in their next visit, in order to prove that they were not spies, but true men. They acquaint their aged parent of the circumstance; but, as might be expected, he would not hear of such a thing for a single moment. "My son," was his decisive language, "shall not go down with you." Before long, however, the supply brought from Egypt began to diminish, and Jacob desired his sons to set out to have it replenished; but their answer was that they would not stir a step unless Benjamin were permitted to accompany them. Well, Benjamin, says the father, shall not go. The old man was resolute on the one hand, and the sons as resolute on the other. But the famine continued to increase; its ravages day

after day were more keenly felt; the sacks from Egypt became empty one after another; and what, in the prospect of speedy starvation, was the perplexed patriarch compelled to say? It was, "If it must be so, take your brother and go." Thus, an apprehension of want did what probably nothing else would have effected. It led Jacob, though Joseph was not, and Simeon was not, to allow that Benjamin also should be taken away. And so with the children of men in reference to their eternal interests. Had they a proper feeling of their condition, no sacrifice would be regarded by them as too great, and no effort be deemed too arduous.

Hast thou, reader, such a conviction of thy spiritual need? Art thou seeking God as thine all-sufficient portion, and that not with Laodicean lukewarmness, but with a decision of purpose, an ardour of holy importunity, commensurate with the importance of the pursuit, and the mighty issues which are at stake? If so, we would address thee in the lan-

guage of encouragement. None ever sought the Lord in vain, who sought him thoroughly in earnest. Even should thy past course be crowded with iniquities of crimson enormity, and thy impression be that no poor wretch ever went to such awful lengths on the downward road ; yet hear what the heavenly voice declares, " If from *thence* thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

17TH DAY.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—Matt. xviii. 20.

The Promised Presence. IF any doctrine of Christianity can be regarded as fundamental, and essential to its very existence, it is that of the deity of Christ. As one remarks, "Were a conspiracy formed in hell to destroy the planetary system, how would the evil powers carry it into execution? Commencing at the outskirts, would they seek to blot out one planet after another, and thus attempt gradually the destruction of the whole? No; but by a single master-blow they would endeavour to strike the sun from the centre, and thus effect their object at once." So with those who deny the divinity of the Redeemer. Only let them succeed in "casting him down from his excellency," and all that is vital and precious in the Christian scheme disappears. He is, in the glory of his person,

and the all-sufficiency of his atoning merits, the groundwork of the whole superstructure; and "if the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

This great truth is never formally proved by the inspired writers; they rather take it for granted, as they do the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. But if the scripture testimony on the subject is of an indirect nature, it is not less conclusive on that account. The passages in which it is clearly involved are exceedingly numerous—far too numerous to be referred to here. Are boundless power and supreme authority divine properties? Jesus says, "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth." All kinds of power are his, all degrees of power—power at all times, and power in all places. It embraces within its ample range the innumerable hosts of heaven above; and while he doeth according to his own will among the armies of the skies, it includes the lower

regions of earth and also of hell ; all the tribes and families, all the elements and influences of the one, and all the wretched legions of the other, being under his absolute control.

And so with the assurance before us. By no mere creature, however exalted his rank, could it be spoken. He has his people gathered together in all parts of the world ; but wherever they are, he assures them that he will be in their midst. Thus, if we deny his deity, and consequently deprive him of the attribute of omnipresence, we even rob him of his rectitude and truthfulness as a man, for in the latter case he promises what it was impossible for him to perform.

But these words, besides being profitable for doctrine, are no less so for consolation. What encouragement do they afford to his true followers when assembled in his name ! His gracious presence they have the surest grounds to expect, however few their number, and however mean their earthly lot.

It matters not where their gatherings are held ; in the humble barn or lowly cottage, in the recesses of the mountain, or the loneliness of the distant desert, with no canopy but the ample vault of heaven—if they are only met in his name, He will be there.

“ Jesus, where’er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat ;
Where’er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”

At the same time it becomes us earnestly to plead for the fulfilment of this precious promise, in accordance with the principle, “ I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Blessed Saviour ! be with us when we wait upon thee in the means which thou hast appointed. Be with us, to answer our prayers, to receive our praises, and to apply thy word with saving energy to our souls. Be with us, to dispense those spiritual blessings which we so greatly need, to renew our fainting strength, and to cheer us with the joys of thy salvation.

We shall then know of the happiness of those who watch at thy gates, and like thy servant of old we shall find that a day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand, and that to occupy the humblest position there, is infinitely preferable to what is enjoyed in the tents of ease, or that can be conferred by all the thrones of power.

18 A DAY.

"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—2 Chron. xx. 20.

Confidence **in God.** THERE is much in the conduct of men which, in the strong language of the Saviour, "is abomination in the sight of God." In reference to every sin, he says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate;" but there are some sins which he regards with peculiar detestation. Among such a place of high prominence must be given to unbelief; for "he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Offensive as any act of open and palpable disobedience must be in his estimation, it is evident that to distrust or deny his word is far more so. Let us suppose the case of two sons, one of whom disobeyed his father's command, and the other disbe-

lieved his veracity; which of them would be likely to grieve him most? Doubtless, the latter. For a child to act in direct opposition to the will of a loving father, would indicate no small amount of guilt and ingratitude; but for him to tell his father to his face—a father whose truthfulness had never been called in question, that he had no confidence in him, and that he was sure his intention was to deceive him—how cutting to the father's feelings would it be! And so with God. We are not for palliating the conduct of the children of disobedience, for it is a fearful thing to break one of the least of the divine commandments; but to question his veracity even for a single moment; to make Him a liar, whose word never has been, and never can be broken; to change the glory of the uncorruptible God, not merely into the likeness of corruptible man, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things, but to that of the great apostate spirit himself, the father of lies, and the deceiver from the begin-

ning! In this there must be involved a degree of turpitude which no words can express, and no mind can imagine.

It is sad to think that there is so much of this spirit even in those who, through grace, have believed. Notwithstanding the numberless proofs they have had of God's faithfulness and love, how prone are they to distrust him, as if there was something doubtful about his character after all. The late John Newton, when addressing a Christian friend, observed—"If, after my repeated and most cordial reception at your house, I should always be teasing you with suspicions of your good-will, and should tell every body I saw that I verily believed the next time I went to see you, that you would shut the door in my face, and refuse me admittance, would you not be grieved and offended? Would you not ask, what reason can he assign for such treatment? He knows I have done every thing in my power to assure him of a hearty welcome, and told him so over and over

again. Does he account me a deceiver? I am surely justified in saying that his friendship is not worth preserving; and no one can blame me if I seek for friends among those who will believe my words and actions." Oh, how often has our gracious Father been grieved in the house of his friends by similar feelings being cherished towards him! What has he done to deserve such conduct at our hands? "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?"

To the disciples Jesus said, "Have faith in God." Reader! we would address the same exhortation to thee. Have faith in Him as the God of providence; for "the eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing." Have faith in Him as the God of grace; for "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?" By so doing thou wilt honour him; and he, according to his

promise, will honour thee in return.
The God of heaven will then prosper
thee, and establish thee in all thy
ways.

19TH DAY.

"I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."—Jer. xxxi. 20.

The Penitent Encouraged. THE views which the scriptures give of the divine character are designed and adapted to preserve us from indulging in presumption on the one hand, and from yielding to despair on the other. In almost every page of his word, and every act of his providence, we behold both "the goodness and severity of God." That he is not, as many imagine, such an one as themselves, fickle in his purposes, too indulgent to fulfil his threatenings, and ever ready to make ample allowances for the frailties of his creatures, is abundantly evident.

"A God all mercy," says the poet, "is a God unjust;" and such, most assuredly, is not the character of Him with whom we have to do. When did he appear a God all mercy? Not at

the fall, for the fearful sentence he then pronounced was carried into execution, and death has passed upon all men, inasmuch as all have sinned. Not at the flood, for then a whole generation were buried for their crimes in a watery grave. Not at the destruction of the guilty cities of the plain, for he rained on them fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, as the awful portion of their cup. Not when the haughty monarch of Egypt, with his mighty hosts, were engulfed in the Red Sea, and all perished together before the blast of Jehovah's nostrils. In these dread scenes, and many others of a similar character, he appeared as glorious in holiness, inflexible in justice, and terrible in his doings towards the children of men.

Far be it from us to intimate that the Almighty took delight in such destructive visitations. That judgment is his strange work, his long-suffering clearly evinces; and when he could bear no longer, what reluctance, yea, what yearning pity has he manifested. "How

shall I give thee up, Ephraim ?” were his words when provoked to anger by that backsliding tribe ; “ mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” And that the bowels of the Father of mercies were moved on the occasions to which we have referred admits of no doubt. His language would be, How shall I consume you, O cities ? How shall I destroy thee, O Pharaoh ? How shall I deluge thee, O world ?

But while there is much in the dealings of the Most High to cause the rebellious to tremble, there is every thing in his character to induce the true penitent to seek his face, and to fall at his gracious footstool. Art thou, reader, bemoaning thy guilt, and panting after the enjoyment of his favour ? For the encouragement of every seeking sinner he declares, “ I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.” A mere peradventure that he would listen to thy cry, would in such a case be a source of joy ; it is not, however, some faint hope,

but the most absolute assurance, that is set forth here. When Esther approached Ahasuerus, not merely did she incur considerable danger, but there was great uncertainty as to whether she would obtain her request. The king might hold out the golden sceptre, or he might not ; if he did there was life ; if it was withheld, the consequence would be death. But in drawing nigh to the King of kings, there is no risk on the one hand, and no room for doubt as to the issue on the other. To every burdened soul the sceptre of mercy is extended, and all who touch it shall live for ever.

20TH DAY.

"But I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."—
Jer. xxxii. 40.

Spiritual Of all distressing scenes
Gravitation. a shipwreck is one of the most appalling. The narratives of such sad catastrophes, notwithstanding the frequency of their occurrence, cannot be read without a thrill of horror. But terrible though it be for the stately vessel, after having weathered many a storm, to founder among the breakers, or be furiously dashed against the rocks, her costly freight destroyed, and her unwary passengers buried beneath the surges of the foaming billows; yet to make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, is an event far more disastrous. And common as are the former, it is to be feared that the latter are more numerous still. In all ages have they occurred, even from the

beginning ; and the instances recorded in the sacred writings are intended for our warning, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Thus Paul writes to one who was specially dear to him : " This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare ; holding faith, and a good conscience ; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck : of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

In the case of these individuals, and innumerable others, their fall was open, flagrant, and, in all probability, irrecoverable. But besides such public and glaring apostacy, there are those who are backsliders in heart, being the subjects of a woful decline in the divine life. " Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." There is a native proneness in the heart to

depart from him, and there are countless objects from without whose direct tendency is, not to counteract that proneness, but to aid and strengthen it. There is the farm and the merchandise, the piece of ground and the five yoke of oxen, together with the wife and children—is not this their tendency? Are there not things lawful in abundance, as well as those that are unlawful, which are calculated to confirm the mind in its earthward direction, and draw it away further and still further from God?

But while there is a proneness within us to forsake Him who is the fountain of living waters, and while there are various external objects whereby it is increased and promoted; yet there is a principle the influence of which is to oppose, and eventually to destroy, such a bias. If it is the tendency of nature to depart from God, it is the tendency of grace to return to him, and abide evermore with him. A striking view is given us of its operation in the

experience of David, as recorded in the book of Psalms. He tells us that his heart and flesh cried out for the living God; that he longed for him as in a dry and thirsty land; that his soul followed hard after him; and that he panted for intercourse with him, even as the hart panteth after the water brooks. In the powerful emotions which he thus expressed we have a clear proof of the Godward tendency of those gracious principles which are implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit. As it is an inherent property in gravitation to attract to the centre, it is an equally inherent principle in grace to operate in the same manner; and the centre to which it draws the soul in its diversified feelings and aspirations is the ever-blessed God.

Reader! art thou anxious to be kept from departing from him? Is it thy sincere desire to be preserved from all declension of heart on the one hand, and all declension of life on the other? If so, see to it that thou art under the

upholding and restraining influences of divine grace. Having thy heart thus established, thou wilt dread the thought of departing from him in the least degree as a calamity the greatness of which no words can express ; the feelings of the Psalmist to which we have referred will then be thine own ; and with the poet thou wilt be fully prepared to say—

“Thou only sovereign of my heart,
 My refuge, my almighty friend ;
 And can thy soul from thee depart,
 On whom alone my hopes depend ?
 Whither, ah ! whither shall I go,
 A wretched wanderer from my Lord ;
 Can this dark world of sin and woe,
 One glimpse of happiness afford ?
 Thy name my inmost powers adore ;
 Thou art my life, my joy, my care :
 Depart from thee ! 'tis death, 'tis more,
 'Tis endless ruin, deep despair.”

21ST DAY.

"They shall prosper that love thee."—
Ps. cxlii. 6.

Attachment EVERY true Christian is distinguished by his concern for the prosperity of God's cause. There are some who hate it, and whose chief object is to obstruct its onward progress. Such there have been in every age, but their opposition has proved unavailing. In its march of mercy it has continued, enlightening the ignorant, purifying the depraved, consoling the wretched, notwithstanding all the efforts of its most malignant foes. There are others, again, who are altogether indifferent concerning it. They do not think it worth their while to assume the attitude of open antagonism, but they have not the least inclination to promote its interests, by coming out to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Like Gallio of old, they care for none of these things. There is a

class, however, of very different views and feelings in reference to that kingdom which is not of this world. It is a cause they ardently love, and they anxiously desire its extension.

There is something deeply touching in the account given of the Jews in the land of their captivity; and their emotions concerning Zion, when mingling their tears with the streams of Babel, far from the land of their fathers' sepulchres, is what no Christian is a stranger to, in reference to Zion still. "By the rivers of Babylon," was their language, "there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." It seems they were accustomed to repair to a place of solitude for the purpose of giving vent to their oppressed feelings. They assemble, we may suppose, in small companies under the refreshing shade of the willows by the water-courses. Their harps they take with them to solace their spirits with some of the sweet songs of Zion. But such is the power of association, that the instant they be-

gan to touch the strings, the memory of distant days, and of long-lost privileges, was vividly recalled. They lay their instruments aside, and cry out in words of deepest pathos, "If we forget thee, O Jerusalem, let our right hand forget her cunning; if we do not remember thee, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth; if we prefer not Jerusalem above our chief joy." Now these words, doubtless, find an echo in the heart of all God's people. Whether Zion prospers or declines; whether her ways do mourn, or whether her waste places are comforted, and her wilderness made as Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; either way they love her, and the strains of the weeping exiles they can adopt with all sincerity.

Reader! art thou a lover of Zion? Do her interests lie near thine heart? These are questions of mighty import; for if thou hast no love for Zion, thou canst not be a true subject of Zion's

King. But if the unfeigned language of thy soul is, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces," thou mayest then conclude that thou art one of her blest inhabitants, and an object of that special favour with which they are regarded. "Them that honour me," says God, "I will honour;" and while there are many ways in which we can do so, a humble endeavour to promote his cause is one of the chief. Be it, then, thy daily inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

O God! arise, and plead thine own cause. Upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, let thine eyes and thine heart be fixed perpetually. Lengthen her cords, and strengthen her stakes, and may her bounds be made coeval with the utmost limits of the habitable globe. Thus may the glorious things which are spoken of her, be speedily accomplished, to the unspeakable joy of her friends, and the disappointment and confusion of her foes.

“ Bright as a sun the sacred city shines :
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light ; the glory of all lands
Flows into her ; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Praise is in all her
gates ;
Upon her walls, and in her streets, and in her
Spacious courts, is heard salvation.
Her report has travell'd forth into all lands :
From every clime they come, to see thy beauty,
And to share thy joy, O Zion ! an assembly
Such as earth saw never, such as heaven
Stoops down to see.”

22ND DAY.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—Hosea vi. 3.

Progressive Piety. THE law of progress appears in all the works of God. Had he pleased we might be one moment in the midst of the scorching heat of summer, and the next surrounded with the snows and sterility of winter. From the tiny acorn, the roots and trunk and wide-spreading branches of the forest oak, might instantly be produced; and the feeble, speechless, and inobservant babe, be at once transformed into the full-grown and perfect man. But the All-wise has ordained varied and gradual processes, whereby spring leads on step by step to summer, and through which summer gently declines into the piercing blasts of winter. Before the sapling becomes the monarch tree, it has to pass through many seasons, and be buffeted by many storms and long

years of feebleness and dependence, of watchful care and assiduous training must elapse, before the faculties of the child are unfolded in the full vigour and maturity of manhood.

To this law great importance appertains, as is evident from the fact, not merely that He has ordained it, of whose works it is declared that "in wisdom hath he made them all;" but it especially appears from the circumstance that in proportion to the slowness of the process is, almost invariably, the value of the result. And not merely is it an important law, but it is particularly pleasing to witness its operation. In all progress, except progress in evil, there is much that is attractive to the mind. It is agreeable to observe a stately edifice rising from its deep foundations, and becoming a lordly mansion. It is entertaining to see the first sketch or rough outline of a splendid picture filled up by the artist, until the final strokes are given, and the work appears a masterpiece of

skill and beauty. It is striking as we walk in our gardens, to behold the trees giving renewed signs of life, and mark the expanding foliage, the opening buds, the bright blossoms, and eventually the thick clusters of rich and ripened fruit. And where is the father or mother whose eyes have not sparkled with delight, while contemplating the child growing in stature; acquiring by degrees the use of its tender limbs; first beginning to totter, and then to walk more firmly; the pointing finger succeeded by the prattling tongue; curiosity awakened, reason dawning, new powers unfolding, and the whole character being formed, full of hope and promise for the future.

But lovely as are such developments, they are nothing when compared with the progress of "the building of God," the growth of "the trees of righteousness," the advance from strength to strength, and the change from glory to glory, of the new-born child of grace, until he attains the measure of

the stature of the fulness of Christ. Such a course, however gradually evolved, and however frequently interrupted, is regarded even by the relestial hosts with thrilling interest and unbounded joy.

There are many promises given to the believer concerning his perseverance in the divine life; but there are also many exhortations addressed to him, in which he is called to advance, to grow in grace, and to follow on to know the Lord. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Reader! does thy piety bear the stamp of permanence on the one hand, and of progression on the other? There are those who are unstable as water, and the verdict both of reason and

revelation is that they shall not excel. There are those whose momentary warmth is like the crackling of blazing thorns; but such is not the fire which cometh down from heaven, and whose glowing flame, fed with live coals from the altar, continues to burn in spite of all the blasts of earth and hell. There are those who are scared at the first approach of danger, and who turn their backs when the least difficulty appears; but, O ye Faint-hearts and Pliables, be assured that crowns and kingdoms in the realms of bliss are not reserved for such as you.

Reader! if thou hast tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire with the greatest intensity the sincere milk of the word, that thou mayest grow thereby. If thou hast put thy hand to the plough, instead of looking back, press daily onward; forgetting the things which are behind, keep thine eye steadfastly fixed, like the great apostle, upon the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

23RD DAY.

"And I will raise him up at the last day."—
John vi. 40.

The Resurrection of the Just. IN the gospel provision is made both for the soul and body; for the soul in cancelling its guilt, restoring it to the divine image, and securing all that is necessary to its everlasting salvation; for the body in its present wants, and its future resurrection. The one is redeemed as well as the other, as is evident from what the apostle states: "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Both are bought, as the words plainly imply, and such being the case it is evident that with both God should be glorified.

It is recorded of Socrates, after he had swallowed the contents of the poisoned cup, that his friends asked him what should be done with his body? He treated the question with the utmost disdain; his pride was mortified at the very thought that he, whose aspirations were so elevated, should feel any concern about his tabernacle of clay, which would soon be reduced to ashes. But the Christian is taught to cherish other feelings in reference to this matter. He knows that his earthly tenement will have to moulder beneath the clods of the valley, but he also knows that his sleeping dust is precious in the sight of the Lord, and that a period will arrive when it shall be raised again to life and immortality.

When the resurrection of the dead was preached to the Athenian sages, they mocked at what appeared to them a doctrine so strange and unreasonable. And so with the enemies of revelation in all ages; they have scouted

the thing as preposterous, and pronounced it to be utterly impossible. But to such scoffers we would say in the words of the Saviour, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." As to the inspired testimony on this subject, nothing can be more clear and decisive; and if its announcements should seem to be incredible, it is sufficient to ask, "Can any thing be too hard for the Lord?" With a word he called creation into existence at first; with a word he can reduce the whole of it to its original nothingness; and with another word he could raise a second universe, even of mightier bulk and richer beauty, in its stead. Let the fact be acknowledged that power, absolute, boundless, irresistible, belongeth unto God, and it must be a palpable outrage to every principle of right reason to deny the possibility of this great event.

Infidelity may, therefore, ask, Can the grave give up her dead? Can the jaws of death relent? Can the body,

crushed into ten thousand atoms, and scattered to the four winds, be again restored, reunited, and revived? We answer, Yes; and we do so with fullest confidence, knowing what the scriptures declare, and what the power of the Omnipotent can accomplish.

But it must not be forgotten that the raising of the dead is specially ascribed to Him, who was himself once a tenant of the tomb. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also 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, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." We have here one of those innumerable proofs, not formally adduced but incidentally, of the essential Godhead of the Redeemer. At his voice the countless myriads of our race will swarm from their sepulchres; and his sentence, either of acquittal or condemnation, will fix their final destinies.

Reader! let it be thy great concern to know him now as thy Saviour; thou wilt then have no cause for apprehension in looking forward to the period when thou shalt stand before him as thy Judge. He is the resurrection and the life, by whom those who are dead in trespasses and sins are quickened and transformed; and if thou art brought savingly to believe in him, thou wilt never come into condemnation, and over thee the second death will have no power.

24TH DAY.

“And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke xviii. 14.

Divine Promotion. The contrast presented between the Pharisee and the publican is wide as the poles asunder. The one was clothed from head to foot in the robes of his own righteousness; he had nothing to speak of, even in the presence of God, but the supposed good qualities by which he was distinguished; full of consequence and pride he evidently regarded himself as a bright ornament of his sect, and a distinguished honour to his nation. But while he thus exalted himself in his own vain imagination, the poor publican was humbled in the dust of self-abasement. Under a deep sense of his own exceeding sinfulness, he “stood afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

In each of the particulars here specified there is much that is worthy of our devout consideration. Conscious that his past life had been one unvaried course of estrangement from God, he now felt that he dared not draw near him. With what force would the words of the Psalmist, had he ever known them, be likely to rush into his mind,—“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts:” but of that high honour he felt that he was altogether unworthy. He therefore stood afar off, as if he dreaded to come into the immediate presence of Him whose frowns he had so richly deserved.

Not merely did he keep aloof from the sacred shrine where God specially dwelt, but his countenance was down —“he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven.” He could now truly say, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that

I am not able to look up." Sometimes, perhaps, he would attempt to raise his downcast eyes; but his feeling would instantly be, If I do look up, what shall I behold? There is nothing but infinite purity there, and how can I, a vile and guilty wretch, gaze upon Him who charges his angels with folly, and in whose sight even the heavens are not clean. He seemed fearful lest his very looks should pollute that holy place. And so with every true penitent. The infinite perfection of the divine character, in contrast with his own filthiness, covers him with confusion, so that he is compelled to cry with Ezra of old, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee."

In proportion to the depth of his shame was the intensity of his sorrow. To indicate his grief, "he smote upon his breast"—he struck it hard, as the word implies, in order to shew that the agony he felt was of no ordinary kind. By this act he also seemed

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anxious to avenge the insults which the great Being had so often received from him. Not merely was it on his breast that the burden of guilt lay with an oppressive weight, but out of it had come all that was sinful in his outward conduct. This was the storehouse from which the evil treasures had been brought forth; the poisonous fountain whence the various streams of pollution flowed; the heaving volcano from which the infernal lava in devastating torrents had emanated. He might well have smote it therefore, being fully assured that the abounding sinfulness of his life could be traced to the inherent corruption and desperate wickedness of his heart.

He was thus brought low, being led, like holy Job, to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes. But, "when men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person." So it was here. While the boasting, self-sufficient Pharisee was debased, being sent empty.

away, the publican was accepted of God, adopted into his family, and enriched with unsearchable riches. Verily "the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up: he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

"Dear Father, let me never be,
Joined with the boasting Pharisee;
I have no merits of my own,
But plead the sufferings of thy Son."

25TH DAY.

"When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."—Acts iii. 19.

Times of Refreshing. IN the history of the church several seasons of gracious visitation appear with marked prominence, in striking contrast with the darkness and depression which had previously existed. The reader cannot fail to revert to what transpired in the times of Joshua, Josiah, and Ezra, under the Old Testament, and especially to the day of Pentecost under the New. He will also call to mind the glorious reformation of the fifteenth century, and the great awakening at a more recent period which followed the labours of Whitfield and Wesley, in our own land. These, and many other memorable occasions, were truly times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

When the Spirit is poured out from on high, the effects produced are two-

fold ; sinners are converted, and professors of religion are quickened and revived. And there is a close connection between the one and the other. The church may be compared to a column of air, which rises in proportion as it is rarified, and the neighbouring atmosphere rushes in to fill the partial vacuum which is caused below. The ascent of the warm air is the signal for the dense mass by which it is surrounded to flow forward, and supply its place. So with the Christian community. No sooner are they warmed and purified than they mount up, God-ward and heaven-ward, soaring even as on eagles' wings. Previously their souls were cleaving to the dust, but now they are enabled to comply with the call, "Come up hither." They do not, however, rise alone ; the careless around them are attracted ; they are drawn in, and carried along, by the gracious current which has been set in motion. Only let Christians be revived, let their love and zeal be visibly mani

fested, and the language is likely to be heard from those who are without, "We will go with you, for we perceive of a truth that God is among you."

The piety of those persons is very doubtful who are not anxious to witness a better state of things in the religious world. While there is much for which we have reason to be thankful, there is also not a little which should be deeply deplored. When will the triumphs of the Redeemer become universal unless the progress of his cause be greatly accelerated? In former times the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved; transformations of the most astonishing nature took place; Satan fell like lightning from heaven, and his throne shook to its very centre; the oracles of Paganism were silenced, her altars deserted, and her temples overthrown. Oh, come those days again when similar, or even still greater wonders, will be wrought! Come those days again, when sinners shall be made

willing in the time of divine power; when the arrows shall be sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby they fall before him; when the cry, from awakened and convicted consciences, will become general, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Come those days again, when Zion shall be enlarged upon the right hand and upon the left, and when by reason of the number of her sons and daughters, she will have to say, "The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell!" Come those days again, when, instead of deadness, there shall be life; when, instead of barrenness, there shall be fertility; when instead of coldness, there shall be holy warmth; and when, instead of a stationary stillness, or a movement that is hardly perceptible, there shall be a rapid and continuous marching onward!

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

Then will the energies of thy drooping church be quickened, and the world which now lieth in the wicked one, will be liberated from its thralldom, and be restored to thy righteous and benignant sway.

26TH DAY.

"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."—Job xvii. 9.

The Steadfast Believer. WHILE the great orb of day is employed to set forth the glory of the Redeemer, it is likewise frequently referred to as emblematic of the character of his people. There are those, it is true, who resemble the sun in the time of Hezekiah, which went backward; and there are many who are like it when, at the command of Joshua, it stood still; but the course of the righteous has its appropriate representation, not in the sun of Hezekiah or Joshua, but in that of David, who speaks of it as "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race: his going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends

of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." So, reader, may it be with thee. May thy path be as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day!

The true believer has many difficulties to encounter, and mighty and malicious foes obstruct his path, who are bent upon his destruction. He has especially to contend with the great adversary, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The language of the proud monarch of Egypt, after the Israelites were released from their cruel bondage, was "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Similar to this is the language of Satan in reference to God's spiritual hosts. He resolves to pursue them with hellish rage, and having overtaken them, to tear them in sunder, and exult with fiendish satisfaction in their ruin. But notwithstanding his purposes of vengeance.

the child of God has nothing to fear. To all his threats he is enabled to say, O thou enemy, with as much ease as a feather is borne along by the sweeping whirlwind, couldst thou effect thy object were I left a single moment to myself; but since my strength and safety are in Him whose arm is omnipotent, whose resources are inexhaustible, who takes the wise in their own craftiness, and turns their counsel into foolishness, I can laugh at all thy fury, and bid defiance to all thy snares.

Speaking of his church, the Saviour said, "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In ancient times the gates of cities were not only their security, but the place of consultation and judicial decisions. So that the above expression includes all the power and policy of Satan and his legions, all the craft and cunning of the serpent and his seed. And while their efforts will be abortive against the church collectively, they will prove no less so against each of its true members.

Let the assurance, then, that "the righteous shall hold on his way," in spite of all the combined energies of earth and hell, impart confidence to my faith, and inspire me with a spirit of undaunted courage. Be it my holy ambition to become a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and as such be ready to endure hardness for his sake. Should I begin to grow weary, let me not forget the promise that those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and soar even as on eagles' wings.

O thou, who givest power unto the faint, let thy strength be made perfect in my weakness. From personal experience may I be enabled to say with thy servant of old, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." If, through the growing infirmities of nature, I shall feel my former vigour decline, through thy abundant mercy grant that, as the outward man perishes, the inward man may be

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renewed day by day. And, in the final struggle, when heart and flesh shall fail, be thou the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

27TH DAY.

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, ye shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers."—Is. xxx. 20.

Gospel. THE possession of the gospel is the highest privilege of which a nation can boast. Many advantages were enjoyed by the Jews, but the chief was, that to them were committed the oracles of God. To have the written word, and a faithful ministry, are blessings with which no temporal favours can for a moment be compared.

While contemplating the spiritual condition of mankind, we have still to adopt the language uttered nearly three thousand years ago, "Behold, darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." Millions there are who can say, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost—whether there be any Saviour, whether

there be any Bible, whether there be any hope of a blessed immortality beyond the grave." Those glorious truths, with which we are so familiar, they have not so much as once heard of them. That God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, being wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—these blessed tidings have never reached their ears, nor cheered their disconsolate hearts. They live and die, without God and without hope; for "where there is no vision, the people perish."

But the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places; our heritage is like that of Goshen of old, for while there is darkness, even a darkness that may be felt, in so many lands, we have light in our dwellings. It was not always so with us, as the early history of Britain clearly shews. There was a time when Druidical

ignorance and barbarity overspread our country ; but, blessed be God, although we have still much to deplore, yet those former things have long since passed away.

Why is it that we are not now the victims of a vile and degrading superstition ? Why are we not worshipping in pagan temples, to pay our homage to senseless stocks and stones ? Why are we not wandering as naked savages, having our bodies daubed over with red and yellow clay ? Why are we not feasting on human flesh, or writhing beneath the sacrificial knife ? Why are not our children shut up in wicker baskets, and then set on fire in honour of some cruel idol ? The answer is, that the light of gospel day has broke upon us, and in consequence, these abominations have vanished even as the rolling mists when the rising sun appears.

For the many distinguished privileges we enjoy, our fervent praises should be presented to Him who hath done such

great things for us. And how anxious should we be rightly to improve them, lest those words be accomplished in our case, "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." What became of the church of Rome, once so famous that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world? It was made a hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Where are the seven churches of Asia? The places which once knew them, know them no more for ever. The blasphemies of the Koran sound where once the name of Jesus was as ointment poured forth; and the banners of an impious impostor wave, where the standard of the cross had been uplifted. Time was given to them that they might know the things which belonged to their peace; but, at length, in righteous judgment, they were hidden from their eyes.

Blessed God! whatever thy dealings may be towards our favoured land, oh,

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take not the gospel away from us. Any other calamity would be infinitely preferable to this. Cripple our commerce, turn our wealth to poverty, visit us with the most devastating wars, give commission to the plague and pestilence to stalk forth in darkness and waste at noonday—any thing but the fulfilment of that fearful denunciation, “Behold, the days come, that I will send a famine in the land ; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”

“ Preserve us from this judgment, Lord,
For Jesus’ sake we plead ;
A famine of the gospel word,
Would be a stroke indeed.”

28TH DAY.

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him."—Hosea xiv. 4.

Hope for the Fallen. TRULY aggravated is the guilt of the backslider, and exceedingly wretched is his condition. Hence the prophet says, that it is not merely an evil, but also a bitter thing to forsake the Lord our God. For such an one to enjoy peace of mind is altogether impossible while he continues in such a state. And it would be well for him to feel his wretchedness more and more, and have a deeper conviction of the enormity of his conduct, that he might be led to long with the utmost intensity for restoration to the divine favour, and the enjoyment of a renewed sense of forgiving love.

"Call to remembrance the former days," says the apostle when addressing the believing Hebrews; and it is most important that all who have turned

their backs upon God should attend to the exhortation. There was a time, perchance, when they found the precious truths of the gospel to be sweeter than honey to their taste; the approach of every returning Sabbath was hailed as a messenger of mercy from the skies; with buoyant steps they repaired to the house of God, and often found that a day spent in his courts was better than a thousand. Then the candle of the Lord shone upon their tabernacle, and they realized in their happy experience the joy of faith, the comfort of love, and the inspiring influence of a lively hope. But, ah! how different now! All spiritual delight has vanished; it belongs to the former things which have passed away. Woful contrast, the contemplation of which leads the soul to say, and that with a depth of emotion which none but the convinced backslider can feel,

“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 once enjoyed !
 How sweet their memory still !
 But they have left an aching void
 The world can never fill."

The duty of such is to return without delay to Him from whom they have wandered ; and to encourage them to do so, the divine word contains innumerable promises which ought to banish every fear. "Yet return again to me, saith the Lord." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." We may well ask, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" Had we received similar treatment, we should be likely to spurn with indignation such ungrateful, such faithless, such provoking offenders. But He with whom we have to do is God and not man, and his thoughts and ways, happily, so transcend ours, as the boundless heavens are high above this low earth, which we trample beneath our feet.

Hast thou, reader, after having avowed the Lord to be thy God, forsaken him, and gone after lying vanities?

Be persuaded to return to his footstool, according to his own express command. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all our iniquity, and receive us graciously: Do this, and he will restore to thee the joy of his salvation, and cause his anger toward thee to cease.

29TH DAY.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."—
Isaiah lx. 1.

Latter-day THE spiritual condition of
Glory. this world is not always to
be what it is at present, or
what it has been during the former
periods of its history. The oft-repeated
expressions, "as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be," cannot,
happily, be employed in reference to
this matter. Not always will the faith-
ful in the land have to utter the mourn-
ful complaint, "This is Zion, whom no
man seeketh after." The mountain of
the Lord's house is to be established in
the top of the mountains, and be exalt-
ed above the hills, and all nations shall
flow into it. Jerusalem is to be made
a praise in the whole earth; the Gen-
tiles shall come to her light, and kings
to the brightness of her rising. Her
walls shall be called Salvation, and her
gates Praise; wasting and destruction

will be unknown within her borders, and her reproach will have passed away. Her sun will no more go down, nor her moon withdraw itself, for the Lord will be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.

It is said that in some parts of the Mediterranean, the sea is so blue that the eye cannot distinguish from the verge of the horizon where the sea ends and the sky begins. Thus earth and heaven seem to be assimilated to, and absorbed in, one another. Now, the predictions of God's word direct our thoughts to a period when a more important and glorious identity will be realized. Many of the representations of Isaiah, and also of John, in the concluding chapters of Revelation, are so glowing and exalted, that several of the expressions adopted would lead us to conclude that their exclusive reference was to the church triumphant above. And yet it is evident that the scenes portrayed relate to this lower world, and the expressive symbols em-

ployed are to receive an actual embodiment here. Such being the case, the enchanting prospect on which the voyager gazes with delight in those sunny climes to which we have alluded, can be truly regarded as typifying the close resemblance which will yet exist between the moral aspect of this fallen planet and that pure region where all is love and peace.

In harmony with this view, one of the sacred writers speaks of "the days of heaven upon earth;" days when the principles of heaven, and the hallowed, loyal, unselfish feelings which characterize its inhabitants, will distinguish the children of men. The will of God as it is obeyed there, is even now the standard after which we are taught to aspire; and the petition presented by numberless saints through successive generations—that his will might be done on earth as it is done in heaven—will receive an answer such as it has never received before.

With what pleasing emotions should

the Christian contemplate the future destiny of the church ! Did Abraham see the day of Christ afar off, and did the prospect cause him to rejoice ; and should not we, in looking forward to his spiritual coming in his kingdom, be filled with joy in like manner ? The pleasures of hope are often pre-eminently sweet and sustaining, even in reference to ordinary interests ; and should we be debarred from indulging therein, and oppress our spirits by viewing continually the things which are, while unmindful of the things which shall be hereafter ? Of the certainty of their accomplishment there is no room for doubt ; for, “as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord ?”

“ () scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss ; which who
can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy ? ”

Be it thine, O my soul, to rejoice
therefore in hope of the glory of God ;

not merely as it will be displayed in the celestial, but also in the millennial state. For its manifestation let thy prayer be daily presented, and let no effort be spared that is likely in any measure to contribute thereto.

30TH DAY.

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."—Rom. iv. 20.

Unwavering Faith. THAT faith is a precious grace is a truth which cannot be doubted; and that unbelief is a sin of fearful magnitude is equally evident. Many are the considerations adduced by the sacred writers to shew the unspeakable importance of the one, and the awful enormity of the other; and it will be well for us to ponder them, and lay them seriously to heart.

The essence of faith consists in crediting the declarations which God has given in his holy word. We there find that he has had recourse to every expedient which it was possible to adopt in order to win our confidence, and banish our doubts and fears. The children of men, when they are particularly anxious that their statements should be received as true, have three

methods which they frequently employ ; and the great Jehovah, in his boundless condescension, has used each of them for the same purpose.

In the first place, it is no uncommon thing for men to state repeatedly the same particular. Their object in iterating and re-iterating any given statement, is not so much with the view of explaining it, for its first announcement might have made the matter perfectly clear ; it is rather to confirm it, and thus gain the confidence of the persons addressed. It is in this manner that God acts. Scarcely a single statement has he made once, that he does not make often ; and hardly a single favour has he promised once, that he does not promise often. The great blessing of pardon may be adduced in proof of this. Had he simply stated that he would forgive us, if we truly turn to him—with one such announcement from his lips who is the great Unchangeable, we ought to be fully satisfied. Our feeling should be, It is enough ; God

has said it, and he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. But not once, but over and over again, is the blessed truth announced that there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." As we have precepts line upon line, so have we promises line upon line, in like manner. Declaration is thus added to declaration, and assurance given to assurance, as if to make it more than doubly sure; and all in order to shut the mouth of unbelief at once and for ever.

The second method which men adopt, is that of taking a solemn oath. Hence, in courts of justice a person's mere word is not received, however high his

character for integrity may be, and however frequently and emphatically he may give expression to what he has to communicate. He must swear to it, and when that is done his testimony is taken as true, the oath for confirmation putting an end to all strife and misgiving. And what says the apostle? "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew 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 strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." How marvellous is this! What strange condescension to our infirmity! As if his word were not sufficient, for Him thus to swear, that no possible ground might be left for the least hesitation!

But there is another way in which matters are confirmed among men, namely, by entering into a formal league or covenant. And this, in some re-

spects, is regarded as more conclusive and binding than all other methods. On such occasions, writings are prepared, seals are affixed to them, the signatures of the several parties have to be given, and credible witnesses must be present to see that all is orderly and straightforward. Well, God has entered into a covenant likewise. Over and above his word, and over and above his oath, we have his covenant; and it is duly sealed and settled, yea, ratified by the blood-shedding of his own Son, who, as our blessed Surety, endured an accursed death, in order to impart certainty to all its blessings, and eternal stability to all its promises, whereby they become in Him yea and amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Such then being the case, how reasonable is it that we should be strong in faith, like Abraham of old! And yet how often are the best of us found staggering through our unbelief!—Grant, blessed Lord! that the remembrance of thy unfailing word, proceed-

ing from thine own lips, and that repeatedly ; of thy solemn oath, sworn by thy own eternal Self, because thou couldst swear by no greater ; of thine everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and which will remain unbroken when the mountains will depart and the hills be removed—let the remembrance of these things produce within me a spirit of reliance the most unwavering, and of confidence the most complete!

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 Cor. vii. 1.

The Practical Result. THE promises of God possess every feature which can recommend them to our notice, and endear them to our hearts. In their contents they are unspeakably important; in their fulfilment they are absolutely certain; and in their influence they are eminently sanctifying.

No better evidence can we possess of our interest in these promises, than for us to abound in those fruits of righteousness which they are intended and adapted to produce. "Whereby are given unto us," says Peter, "exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye, might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Having proceeded from God, their special object is to make us like

God—like Him in righteousness and true holiness. In possessing this conformity is involved the chief happiness and highest dignity of which we are capable. It is true that to aspire after resemblance to Him in other respects would be the most presumptuous madness, the very essence and climax of sin. How was it with the rebel angels? They strove to be like him in authority and dominion; the feeling by which they were actuated appears to have been similar to that of the impious king of Babylon, who said, "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High." But He who reigns supreme, and whose glory he will not give to another, visited them for their unhallowed daring with a fearful but well-merited doom. The sin which occasioned the fall of our race was of the same nature—the same in spirit, although different as regards the object contemplated. To resemble the Divine Being in wisdom was the suc-

cessful bait which the tempter held out to our first parents, his language being, "In the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." But while they sought to be partakers of God's wisdom, and the fallen angels to be partakers of his power, we may, without incurring any guilt, or exposing ourselves to any danger, seek to be partakers of his holiness. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is his own exhortation; and all the promises of his word, and all the diversified events of his providence, are designed to secure that glorious and most important result.

There have been persons in all ages who have held the truth in unrighteousness. Having promises so free, and invitations so unlimited, they have abused the mercy which was so bountifully offered, and have continued in sin that grace might more abound. The mischief done by such impure professors cannot be estimated; great occasion have they given to the enemies of the

Lord to blaspheme. Never are the adversaries of the gospel more gratified than when some scandal is brought to light in connection with those who call themselves Christians; and from such disclosures they do not hesitate to conclude that all religious persons are rank hypocrites, and that the tendency of the system is to afford encouragement to sin!

Both of these inferences are preposterous in the extreme. As an excellent writer inquires, "Is there no grain in our barn-yards, because there is so much chaff? Are all patriots—Wallace, Tell, Russell, Washington—deceivers and liars, because some men have villanously betrayed their country? Is there no bright honour in our army, because some soldiers, the sweepings probably of our city streets, have left the lines, and leapt the trenches, and deserted to the enemy? Is there no such virtue as integrity among British merchants, because now and then we hear of a fraudulent bankruptcy? And

because some religious professors prove hypocrites, is therefore all ardent piety hollow hypocrisy? To reason thus, argues either a disordered intellect, or a very depraved heart."

But however little we should heed these charges as far as we are personally concerned, yet very jealous should we be for the honour of the great Master, and the credit of his cause. Reversing the great principle of the atonement, such persons instead of seeing the sins of many laid upon one, may, if so disposed, lay the sins of one, or a few upon many; but, as the apostle declares, "Let God be true, though all men were liars," so let us feel in reference to the religion of Christ even were the majority of its adherents manifest deceivers.

Although a system of grace, the gospel is, notwithstanding, from beginning to end, a system according to godliness. All that is evil it calls upon us to forsake; all that is lovely and of good report it exhorts us to follow after.

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May it be thine, O my soul, to feel its hallowing influences, and to exhibit its holy fruits! Whatever others do, may it be evident that sin is regarded by thee as thy greatest foe, and purity both of heart and life, as thy highest and noblest attainment.

THE END

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