

A
VOICE
TO
THE FAITHFUL.

“He that striveth for the mastery is temperate
in all things.”—1 Cor. ix. 25,

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A Voice to the Faithful.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter iii.—*Continued.*

THUS we have a revelation of heavenly things brought directly to us from heaven by Christ, and in His person. He revealed these things in all their fresh beauty, a freshness which belonged to Him who dwelt for ever in heaven, and which He always enjoyed. He revealed these things in the perfection of His person, who was the glory of heaven. His nature is the atmosphere which all heavenly creatures breathe, and by which they live. *He* is the object of all the affections which exist in the Holy place, from the Father Himself down to the last angel who fills heaven's court with praise! He, Christ, is the centre of all heaven's glory. Such is the Son of man, He who came

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Psalm ii.), He must take the more extended position of Son of man, set over the works of God, all things being put under His feet. (Psalm viii.) We also find in Daniel vii., the Son of man brought before the Ancient of days to receive the kingdom. The fact that He had created all things is given to us in the Colossians as the reason of His being the Firstborn of all the creation, He takes His place in it, according to God's counsels. This He did in order to bear the penalty of sin before God, to be the propitiation for our sins, and to put them away for ever, so that we should not perish.

THE NAZARITE PATH.

Nothing can be more solemn for, or important to, the saints of to-day, than a true understanding of the path of one separated to God in such a world as this ; for however blessed and exalted the *position* be, it will surely be lowered in the soul, and fail to be practically

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realised in its blessedness, if the path and ways suitable to it are not accepted and maintained. Some may object to an apparent severing of the path from the position, but this is not intended in any sense, and it is only because at this moment it is severed *in practice*, and that there are many who neither adopt nor pursue such a path, although *outwardly assuming* the position, that the subject is thus treated of; and it is in the earnest hope and prayer, that the Lord may be pleased to awaken hearts to the magnitude of all that is involved in being a separated one, that these few thoughts are brought before the Lord's beloved people. Now it has been long accepted as the truth of God, that whereas in the Epistles to the Ephesians and even Colossians, we see our place in and with Christ, in that of the Philippians, we have christian walk in the power of the Holy Ghost, or the path of those who are of that company described as "the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and do not trust in flesh"—and of those

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of whom it is said, "our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour." Four great realities then may be pointed out which characterise the life and path of one who is united to a glorified Christ at the right hand of God.

1st.—There is the earnest desire and hope, and of course full purpose of heart, that Christ should be magnified in the body whether by life or by death. (Phil. i. 20.) What could be more blessed than that the vessel in and through which Satan brought dishonour on the name of God and misery and wretchedness on the creature, should be now so entirely the vessel of Christ, that He should be magnified in it! The reason, and motive power of this is, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." What a motive! Christ Himself had taken the place of everything, in the heart of His beloved servant, not even his desire for the saints and the welfare of the church of God, nor his service and work generally, much as he

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loved and was devoted to both, ruled his affections—his motive, power, all, was Christ, and the thought of Him alone can give a divine balance, and adjust all in its true place. The magnitude of a path on earth governed by such a motive and object, fills the heart with wonder, and the manifestation of it, as set forth in Christ magnified in the body, whether by life or by death, is most blessed. Alas, how little the path of His saints to-day is marked by such a motive as this, it seems as if we had as a whole dropped down to such a low platform in our ways, while externally adhering to the divine position which surely judges them, and yet it does look as if our collective insensibility was so great, our spiritual senses so dormant, our true instincts so blunted if not gone altogether, that the immense contrast between the position we assume, and the ways we pursue, does not appear to strike us. Oh! may the blessed Lord awaken in this closing moment His beloved people to a clear perception of the power there is in His Son the Lord

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Jesus Christ as their true position and portion, so as to be their motive for a life and path suitable to Him with whom they are one in glory, and He in them on earth; thus will Christ be magnified in our bodies, not that He can be made greater than He is, but that all that He is, in His blessedness and beauty should be manifested in our bodies on the earth—and surely this would shew a heavenly path, a “manner of life, *purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience*”—amid the greatest trials and exercises of these closing days.

2nd.—The next characteristics of the path of a separated people are found in Philippians ii., iii., the mind that was in Christ of *lowliness and graciousness and unselfishness* is to be their mind, even as it was witnessed in Paul himself, Timotheus and Epaphroditus, and these are “the circumcision,” that is, that which is dead to sin, and to the flesh; “the concision,” on the contrary, being that which allowed the flesh; in reference to this see Levit. xxi. 5 as “*the circumcision*,” our practical ways would mani-

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fest it, worshipping *by the Spirit of God*, boasting in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. How entirely all this is outside, not the worst, but the very best of the man here, the first Adam—Christ and the Holy Ghost, instead of flesh and self—for it is in the sense of all that is good and religious and respectable in the flesh, that it is here spoken of. What a path this is, for His saints now, and what tongue is capable of expressing the blessedness and comfort of such ways, as are trodden in company with this invisible object and power !

3rd.—But further on, we are told that a separated people on earth, are such, because of new associations in a new sphere—for “our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”—blessed for ever be His name, for the comfort of knowing and the privilege of testifying that in the highest and truest sense we are citizens “of no mean city,” that on high where He is and with Himself is our only country and home ; hence it is that we must be “strangers

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and pilgrims on the earth." And surely we who by faith and in spirit may already be possessed by our portion in the heavens, cannot refuse a less confession than that which emanated from the worthies of old (see Heb. xi. 13-16) and hence it is that we claim for our rejected Lord and Master, a manner of life in His beloved people, which would *manifest* clearly their enjoyment of their own country and home on high—and shall this be denied to Him? Shall it be said that it is *unpractical* to press upon the saints whose place and portion is on high, pilgrim ways and stranger habits on the earth? Oh! shall it not be rather felt, and deeply too, that no *practical* strangership, no unworldly walk, no pilgrim spirit or path, could ever fully or adequately express how entirely and completely those united to Christ in glory are outside of man and outside of earth? Lord, only Thyself can enlighten the eyes of our hearts to see the *greatness of Thy calling!*

4th.—Another characteristic of the separated path, is the superiority which is

found in it to all circumstances, a competency and a power in Christ which makes its possessor independent of all; not in any sense is it hardness or insensibility, but such practical apprehension of the sufficiency of Christ, as enabled the apostle to say, "I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am to be satisfied in myself. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in him that gives me power." (Chap. iv. 11-14.) What a testimony, and what a path! And so fully had he proved this blessedness for himself amid the trials and exigencies of this path of life and light down here that as he thinks of others whose care and thought of him touched a heart not insensible though superior, he can say, "But my God shall *abundantly supply* all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Such then are a few of the rich and blessed features

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of the path and walk of a heavenly man on this earth ; united to Christ in glory, and *therefore* separated *to Him* and *from all* that belongs to a world where He is still rejected and refused ; the light of that glory where He is, and in which He is seen, cheering and brightening the outside path where His sympathy and succour are known and enjoyed, and superseding and eclipsing the brightest thing of which He is neither the source nor centre.

May He who thus revealed Himself on the road to Damascus, as a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, in like manner shine into, and fill the hearts of His beloved people to-day, so that the separated path on earth may be their joy and comfort and satisfaction till He come. W. T. T.

STATE AND CONDUCT.

As to a Christian, his state must depend on one of two things.

STATE AND CONDUCT.

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1st. Where the word of God controls by the Spirit.

2nd. Neglect of the word.

From one of these two is produced a Christian's state of soul. Now the first is the only right one, and in as far as I myself am in a right state I shall have unhindered communion by the Spirit with one in such a state, without knowing anything about his conduct. If I meet him even for the first time in my life this will be so. And further, if on fuller acquaintance I have his acts before me, his *conduct* will still commend itself to me, that is, if we are both right as to state, as I have said.

But the second is all wrong, and in as far as I myself am in a right state I shall have no fellowship with such an one, even though I have no special *conduct* of his before me to guide me. I have met him for the first time. His *state* is wrong, and there is a spiritual instinct produced by the Spirit, who knows and cannot sanction his state, and this (though I am incapable of explaining it) is communicated to me, if I

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myself am humble and spiritual. (1 Cor. ii. 14–16.) If one acts while in this second condition which I have named, we have then his conduct before us. This must of necessity be all wrong too if his state is wrong, and must therefore be separated from. But the moral separation was there long before, and known.

The state, then, produces one of three things : either *good conduct*, *bad conduct*, or *inactivity*. Where the state is evil, the conduct must necessarily be so, and where the state is good, the conduct, being the outflow, will also be good. (Matt. vii. 16–18.) But there is also this, which must not be overlooked, a state of inaction, wherein the word is neglected and the truth not obeyed. (Gal. iii. 1.) A state wherein the soul, that did like the Galatians once, “run well,” is now “hindered,” wherein the “first works” (Rev. ii. 5) begun in the Spirit, are no longer done, a state over which the gloom of indifference and neutrality as to the truth and Spirit are fast settling down ; works of a legal kind being nevertheless flourish-

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ing and abundant. This is a terrible state. Not even to all the dreadful moral evil denounced by him to the Corinthians does the apostle address such solemn warnings and denunciations as we find addressed to those in it. (See Gal. i. 6-9 ; iii. 4 ; iv. 11, 20 ; v. 1, 4, 7, 12, &c.)

To say nothing of its dreadful effect upon the soul, which is certain (1 Cor. xv. 33) ; it is a solemn thing not to be acting in moral separation from those whose *state* is wrong, and it indicates what is my own condition of soul. Nor is it necessary to await the *conduct* of such to guide, for there may be no specially culpable conduct, nor such as the assembly can deal in discipline with, yet a manifestly bad state, so that there is the neglect of what scripture terms "obeying the truth" as led of the Spirit. (Gal. iii. 1 ; v. 18.) Any one divinely taught must see that there was moral separation between the Galatians and the apostle as long as they continued in this state, while there was yet no giving them up, but a seeking on his part

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to rouse them up to their privileges.
(Gal. iv. 12.)

May the Lord sustain in us faithfulness to each other with that moral separation from every form of evil which the word teaches, and which the Spirit leads to, and that practical separation, too, which is consistent therewith.

H. C. A.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

WHO IS IN THE TESTIMONY?

THERE has always been a testimony. The expression "the testimony" is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament. The "ark of the testimony," "the tabernacle of the testimony," and "thou shalt give him the testimony." From the constant repetition of the word, it is very evident that the testimony was of the greatest importance. It is not necessary to add more to establish this great fact. Let us then first ascertain *the testimony proper to the church*, and now even when general declension has set in, the faithful are called to main-

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tain it. There having been a testimony always, it varied according to the revelation God gave of Himself. The testimony could not go beyond the revelation, but necessarily must be in keeping with it. There was always, at every time, a feebleness or a declension in maintaining the testimony, or a surrender of it when personal consideration weighed with the Lord's people; that is, if those who were called to witness were uncertain as to their own relation with God, or were indifferent to it, they forgot what was due to God, and considered only for themselves.

The testimony now is, "He shall testify of me." God sent His Son into this world that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, and He is now at God's right hand, the Head of His body the church, which is down here as the real tabernacle of testimony. In the limits of this paper it is not possible to set forth fully the terms of the testimony. Suffice it to say that the testimony

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In conclusion, we must distinguish between those who are earnestly seeking to be true to the christian calling, really growing into the testimony, however slowly, and those who, while professing to be in it, are insensible to the nature of the practice which it demands. The seller of jewelry might be pressing on in true and rapid strides to the testimony, but he cannot be in it. He who seeks a livelihood by selling things, for man's glory, surely he is not in the testimony, however in heart he may approve of it and long to be in it. If he has a true sense of what becomes a follower of Christ now, he could not make a gain by inducing any professor to adopt what was wholly inconsistent to the testimony. Some then may exclaim, "Who then is in the testimony?" I answer, "Though they are few, we are not for that reason to lower the standard. That, as I have said at the beginning, has been ever the snare of the adversary. "As it is so hard to keep it up, let us reduce it or surrender it altogether. Let us turn

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back again into Egypt." Nay, let us accept the gravity and blessedness of our calling, and look to the Lord that we may cleave the more to Him, and then by the Holy Ghost we shall be enabled to be really in the testimony, the only path or course suited or satisfactory to the devoted heart on the earth. The more we love Him, the more we are in every particular like Him, and unlike the world that would not have Him. When I lose sight of Him, I lose sight of the testimony, and of the power to carry it out.

 LAMPS TRIMMED.

BRIGHTLY in the heavenly height,
 Shines the clear Shechinah light ;
 Lord our waken'd heart aspires
 Far above the starry fires,
 To the throne where Thou art sitting,
 Claiming grace our weakness fitting ;
 Once again to Thee we pray.
 On the point of coming day.

Falling low we sadly own
 That our light has paler grown,
 Since the time the herald spoke,
 And the slumb'ring virgins woke,

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Crying at the midnight hour
By the mighty Spirit's power ;
When aroused by His acclaim
We sought to trim the smould'ring flame.

Yet to thee again we turn
Though our feeble state we mourn,
For one last supreme endeavour
Ere we leave dark earth for ever ;
Fresher power from Thee deriving,
'Gainst the powers of evil striving.
Thus the lamps, more brilliant made,
Sparkle through the sombre shade.

Still to Thee in patience cleaving,
Slight and scorn and anger braving,
Bearing in this world of sin
Light of heavenly origin,
Mercy, grace, and self-denial
Through this pressing hour of trial ;
These as luminaries glow
And exotic virtues shew.

Ending is our mission here,
Soon we mount to that high sphere,
Clad in splendour ev'ry one,
Every countenance a sun,
As "the Man of sorrows'" face*
Sudden shone with dazzling blaze ;
Every furrow'd line of care
Shall be changed to glory there.

* Luke ix, 29.

J O H N'S G O S P E L.

Chapter iii.—*Continued.*

THERE it was that He who had not known sin was made sin before God in an absolute manner, and there His absolute obedience was seen to be perfect, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath commanded me, even so I do." *He must* be lifted up, the need of this was weighing upon us; righteousness and God's very nature demanded that sin should be put away. But the sinner could not put away his own sin; burdened as he was already with this sin, what could he do to put it away? But the Son of man, rejected by men, has been lifted up before God, and there made sin, without any other thing or person in His work—alone before God. It was no question here of Jewish promises, but of satisfying God's glory in this place; it was the last Adam, not disobedient as the first was, when he was enjoying all God's blessings, but

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responsibility and God's glory is resolved and settled for the believer; there can be now no judgment for him, otherwise all would not be finished; this would be a denial of the efficacy of Christ's work. The soul would be placed upon another footing, a footing necessarily false, if this one (of Christ) be true, for nothing and no one can be what He has been.

He then that believes in Him shall not be judged, as it is said also in chapter v. of this gospel. He who believes hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment. But he who believeth not in Him is already judged, because He hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. The presentation of the Son of God, of the Word made flesh, to man, had already put him to the test. The question of man's state had been answered, he rejected God in the person of His only-begotten Son, the full light; and God is light as He is love. Here it is not a question of sovereign love, but of conscience and responsi-

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bility. The light has been in the world and has shone clearly; the light of men, adapted to men. They have preferred darkness to light, because their deeds were evil. Conscience feels the light, but that does not change the will; and if the will remains in a state of perversity, conscience makes divine light insupportable. The state of the will as to God manifested down here, when conscience recognises the light, is that which forms the basis of present judgment, present but final in its character; there, where Christ has been thus presented.

FEED THE CHURCH OF GOD.

THE word feeding embraces both food and culture, or discipline, which would promote true spiritual growth. The declension in the church has been ever marked by the lack of both. When the spiritual instruction is meagre, the discipline is careless or defective, and consequently there is no growth. In the reformed churches you may find

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the gospel preached, but little or no food for the saints, while the discipline is always lax and insufficient, both individually and collectively. It would be incongruous to suppose that there could be good food where there was not true discipline. It would in effect be that the food had no formative power. In common life if the food be wholesome, there is a correct development of the creature according to its order. The food is to increase the strength, and the discipline to subject the strength to its proper duties. The food for christian growth is of God. Its virtue is disclosed in the discipline or culture which it effects. If the latter be defective, we may be assured the former is not nourishing.

How could Christ be ministered in the power of the Holy Ghost when there was practical indifference as to the worldliness of the saints. It is for us to ascertain, both from scripture and actual experience, that according as the food is good, so is the discipline true. I do not confine discipline to

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what is ecclesiastic merely, though of course I do not exclude it. Discipline in scripture is very comprehensive. It is the order or control to which one is subjected, like a soldier's drill. If the soldier were not properly fed, and had not sufficient strength, it would be vain to expect he could be drilled, though on the other hand, he would be no use, however well fed, if he were not drilled. Now, in Christianity, the word of God in power effects both concurrently. Take any of the churches in the New Testament, and we shall see that according to the quality of the food, or ministry of the word, in that company, so was the care as to walk and sanctification, that is, discipline there.

For example, at Thessalonica, where "our gospel came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost in much assurance ye became followers of me and of the Lord ensamples to all those that believe in Macedonia, and from you sounded out the word of the Lord . . . but also in every place your faith to

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Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." Food and discipline were found together here. In the next chapter, the apostle tells us he was both a nurse and a father to them, "that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." It is not that great disorders and troubles may not arise in a place and in a company where the word is faithfully ministered, but the apostle always is confident in the power of the word of God, and there must be a marked decline in the quality and supply of the food when no evidence of its usefulness and virtue is perceptible. Where is the gardener or shepherd in natural things who would take it lightly, were his fruit trees and flock year after year declining in size and quality? What must it be ascribed to? If the natural defectiveness of the trees or the sheep be pleaded, then skill and food have

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not effected anything, nor even prevented deterioration. In the case of Christians, it may be urged that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that Satan is ever at hand to hinder and damage. There is no question as to the terrible nature of the opposition, but He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world, and the servant of the church has not only the support of the Holy Ghost, but he addresses or ministers to the nature of Christ in the saint, and therefore he cannot shelter himself under the defectiveness of his charge. I do not say that the continued and protracted perverseness of a company will not call down the judgment of God, and the prophet shall be hid in a corner. There shall be no open vision and they shall have pastors after their own types. Like people like priest. This has often occurred, but not in the first instance ; and this confirms what I have advanced, that wherever the word is in power in a company, practical effects follow and are perceptible.

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In Corinth, evidently a very low order of teaching prevailed. There lurked at the bottom of all their laxity the grievous heresy that there was no resurrection of the body. What does the apostle rely on to correct or amend this state of things? On a clear, full, vigorous, setting forth of the word of God, and it was effectual. What a change was effected in them! What a recovery from so low and disorderly a state! "In all things you have proved yourselves to be clear in this matter." When disorders, or a low state exists, the real remedy is the vigorous ministry of the word by faithful servants, and though all may not be awakened to a fresh start, yet many will, and the faithfulness of the servant will leave its mark broadly on the company. Even one faithful minister will have a marvellous effect on all. If they do not all go to the battle, they all partake of the spoil; though those, as with Israel, who staid at home, were not appointed by their gains to the same moral service as those who had endured the conflict.

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Surely it ought and does affect every true-hearted servant when he sees that his labours in the word are not attended with any gain to his hearers. He cannot ascribe all the blame to them, he must be exercised in heart as to how far the weakness or worldliness he deplores is traceable to a lack in his ministry. Before the kingdom of heaven was likened unto ten virgins who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, while the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept, the servant had said in his heart "My lord delayeth his coming," and began to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 29-31.)

The apostle insists on the other side. He writes, We were ensamples unto you

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to follow us, in the smallest details of daily life. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." And again, "Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do." The apostle expects no practice higher than his own, and he can always give himself as the model. If it be to establish the propriety of working for one's own livelihood, he can give himself for an example; if for separation from the world, or for general practice, he can give himself. The greatest teacher was the most excellent practitioner. Truly otherwise the word of God would be of none effect, and a man listening to it would be like a man beholding his natural face in a glass, and going his way, straightway forgetting what manner of man he was. It is the doer of the word that is blessed in his deed. No greater evidence is there of decline in the church than the little food for the saints, and the little discipline, while there may be a zeal

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for gospel work, and for the amiabilities of life. We have seen typical examples in this country, forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ being popularly and extensively presented, expressly covenanting that no measure of separation from any church system would be a consequence ; while a system of holiness in life and manner was inculcated which did not require any path of separation from the world. These two remarkable energies in our day ought to have had a warning voice to every enlightened soul as to the strange position to which they might drift. Can any one interested in the Lord's work, and acquainted with it generally, not see that while the gospel is extensively preached, there is not much food for souls, and the discipline or culture defines the measure and quality of the former ? Food is an unfolding of Christ suited to the need of souls, and as it is received, the culture individually and collectively is in keeping with it. If the teachers are in the world, they can preach an awakening

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and a clear gospel, and really seek to rescue lost souls out of the world, but if they teach, they cannot propose honestly or effectively for any soul to go beyond themselves. They cannot insist on the virtue of the truth beyond their own experience of it. And therefore as they are honest, they never can present truth in a way to effect a separation from the world which is beyond their own practical sense of it. A man may interpret a passage very clearly who could not properly insist on the virtue of that scripture, simply because he had never felt it himself. Hence the food seldom rises above the gospel, or the Lord's care and help on the earth. If I am in error it is easy to confute me. When does one now-a-days hear or read soul-stirring utterances respecting the depths and interest of Christ's heart for the church, the unique incomparable delight of being in communion with the Father and the Son? The touching, mellowing, cheering sympathy of His priestly service through all the exigencies of the wil-

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derness, enjoying His glory, transformed by it, and travelling home to it. Raise the tone and character of the food, and the discipline will be the fruit. The way to train up a child, is the way to feed a soul; "In the nurture and discipline of the Lord."* And as the caterpillar tells the leaf it feeds on, so in the highest moral way does the life of a Christian.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.
HOW THE LORD SUPPORTS HIS WORD.

THE Lord gave the word, great was the company of them that published it. One great mark is the way in which the word, not any particular system of theology, but some definite word from Himself, is spread abroad. There will be concurrent with this an effort of the

* The word *παιδεία* is used six times in the New Testament; for nurture in Ephesians vi. 4; for "instruction in righteousness" in 2 Timothy iii. 16; and four times in Hebrews xii. for chastening or chastisement.

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him ; but he adds, " Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear : and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (2 Tim. iv. 17.) Remark how he insists that the preaching or proclamation should be fully known, and that all the Gentiles should hear. Though single handed he has no fear for the truth of God, for the Lord was with him.

The Lord grant that however opposed, or however nearly overwhelmed, we may never swerve from the truth committed to us. And may our faith in God to defend His own, only increase as we are deserted by those on whom we might have counted ; assured that as our Lord left this earth from a Bethany, He on His coming again will find a Bethany here to meet and greet Him. Let us therefore quit ourselves like men and be strong. He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.

EXCOMMUNICATION.

THE most solemn act of the church of God is, "put away from among yourselves that wicked or evil person." The word for evil is that used for the world; "the whole world lieth" in it; the opposite to the church. But the person being put away, then arises the question, 'How is that person to be regarded or treated now?' We get help to answer the question in 2 Thess. iii., where we are directed not to keep company with a brother because he refused to work with his hands for his daily bread. Now if the rule be so stringent for such a minor offence, when there is no immoral conduct, nor church insubordination, how much more must it apply in the case of a person put away! In 2 Thess. iii. the person is not put away, but is subjected to distance and coldness of manner, in order that he might be ashamed; that he might feel how his brethren disapproved of his unhandsome mode of

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living. Hence when one is put away it is enjoined, "with such an one no not to eat." The excommunicated is for the time suspended from all connection with the body, and apart from the support of the Holy Spirit. If he truly feels his position, he must be soon overwhelmed with grief; and if he does not, he will become the tool of the enemy. If the Spirit of God suspends a person's place in the church, and this with the express object of eliminating from the offender the flesh which had offended, surely no spiritual soul could act in any other way.

There is often a well-intentioned kindness in the more amiable to relax the severity of excommunication, but they defeat their own object; they are not wise, for they are not in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. God is wiser than man. Grace is wiser than nature. The grave position of the excommunicated is weakened, if not entirely frittered away by the unspiritual pity with which human feelings

EXCOMMUNICATION.

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would mitigate the penalty of excommunication ; never remembering that the object of the penalty is to effect a great result, which as far as they are concerned must be defeated by this unwise and unspiritual social familiarity.

Another thing is, the one who fails in carrying out the most solemn responsibility known in the house of God, invariably fails in everything connected with divine order everywhere. If the greatest be disregarded, how can the least command attention. If I disrespect Him in His own house surely He will allow my folly to be exposed, and often in a very painful way in my own house.

Lastly, be it remembered, that the more faithfully I adhere to the Spirit's action in putting away, the more am I seeking for the budding of repentance in the one put away, and the godly sorrow which works it. The first one to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection was the repentant Peter : He delights in confirming His love to the repentant one. If I understand the mind of the Lord in directing the

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offender to be put away, I submit myself fully to His will ; and as He waits to be gracious, so do I, if I am led by Him, rejoice in being allowed to confirm my love to the restored one.

THE COMING.

HAIL, Morning Star !
For us Thy lamp is burning clear ;
Though seen afar,
Thou bringest ev'ry blessing near ;
Thy cheerful flame dispels our fear !

Sleep flies away,
As, with high virtues heavenly,
Descends Thy ray,
And fills our souls with ecstasy ;
Fain in the glory would we be !

Ah ! may no cloud,
No chilly mist Thy shining hide ;
No earthly shroud
Cover the eyelids of the bride !
May she be lost to all beside !

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter iii.—*Continued.*

THE end of the chapter determines the relative positions of John the Baptist and Christ. John's true mission was an earthly one ; he spoke of the Messiah to Israel, and of the kingdom in connection with this people ; as the immediate precursor of the Christ, the most favoured as to position of all the vessels of testimony who had preceded him, he was by this very fact greater than all the prophets : but he did not come to the manifestation of heavenly things. Those who have believed since Christ's ascension enjoy this privilege ; the smallest in the kingdom of God is greater than John. In Christ's person the Baptist could see the glory which belonged to Him, and which, by grace belongs to his own also ; but the veil was not yet rent, and there was not yet a glorified Man in heaven. Personally, Jesus had brought heavenly things down here ; He revealed the Father

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the veil not being yet rent. The truth itself was there, the Spirit without measure (up to that time upon Him alone) filling Him with the things of heaven whence He had come. He whom God had sent, always spoke the words of God Himself in all that He said, and that in a man and by a man, but who was the Son of God, and by the Holy Ghost without measure.

It is very possible that the last two verses of the chapter are by John the Evangelist and not by the Baptist, as it has been thought; but I see no peremptory reason why they should not be by the latter. Up to the end of verse 34, it seems to me clear that we have the words of John the Baptist; and John mingles his testimony with the things he relates, all being of God. The last verse might make one think that the words are those of the evangelist, as they contain a testimony so often repeated in his writings. There is also in the testimony a change analogous to what we saw in verses 16–18 of chapter i., as to the use of the name of *God* and

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of that of *Father*. We must in this instance notice carefully this fact, that the question is not to know whether the witness of these two verses is from God, but that it is only in order to understand clearly the character and position of the person who was the vessel of this testimony, and that both for our instruction and as an interesting subject for our hearts. The Spirit of God committed the word to John the Baptist; the same Spirit directed the evangelist both in bringing to our memory that which John the Baptist said, and in the words which he himself pronounces. The last two verses however seem rather the expression of a reality that the evangelist knew and possessed by the Holy Ghost, as a present actual thing, than a prophetic testimony however high.

ON FOLLOWING THE LORD.

DEEP indeed must be the declension in the soul of any saint, if he have ever known his calling, who denies our im-

perative obligation to follow the Lord fully. "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Matt. x. 38.) All, perhaps, assent to it in words ; all, alas ! fail in practice. But the more clearly we see it to be the only normal state for the saint on earth, and discern its character, the more, if we be true-hearted, are we helped on in it.

Be it first remarked, there is no true state but this. A man may be a Christian, but if he be not following the Lord there is a fearful hiatus between his status and his state. There may be weak faith, little intelligence, and much unsubdued self, but if there be real purpose of heart as a follower of Christ, the state is a true, though imperfect one. On the other hand, there may be striking christian virtues and much knowledge of the word, but no true state and attitude of soul for lack of a loyal following of the Master. In the former case we have everything to hope ; in the latter, how much to fear !

It may be instructive to take a rapid

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glance at how the Lord constitutes us His followers. "In him was life," we read, "and the life was the light of men." In a word, He was the essential, as He was the exclusive fount of blessing; and He was here for that magnificent end—to open that fountain to us. "I am come," said He, "that they might have life and have it abundantly." So that we read, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." The life is imparted and is Himself. It is identical in its nature with that which generates it—as in every case—it is accordingly as divine, as heavenly, as eternal as His! And it has its suited food, its due provision. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me." He accordingly speaks of Himself as the living bread and the bread of life in that wonderful sixth of John—wherein, as the treasury of the saint, are found the rich provisions of His grace; Himself being seen there as the imperishable food of an imperishable

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life! Now *feeding* is the first practical expression of conscious spiritual life, the first act of living faith. Thus it is the divine criterion; as the Lord said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." We have there the negative side of the question. The Lord next puts it positively, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." (John vi. 53, 54.) The importance of this is seen in the double way in which it is presented. Where there is no eating there is no life, where there is this eating there is eternal life. And so of growth; if there be no eating there can be no growth, for there is no life. So Peter says of the word, "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." As the feeding upon Christ, His flesh and His blood, is really redemption, and thus eternal life, so the feeding upon His word is the divine provision for our spiritual growth, with which also comes in ministry, the bequest of His grace, "till we all come

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. . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv. 13.)

This suggests a second thing, namely, the *learning from Christ Himself* which is the true qualification for service, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Here are three things in their divinely beautiful order. The *exhortation* of Christ: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." The *example* of Christ: "For I am meek and lowly in heart." And the *encouragement* of Christ: "Ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Let us no longer deny that learning is the qualification for service, but let us insist that it is not that of the schools and colleges, but the learning at the Master's feet. And not the learning of Him only, but from Him; that is, that He is not the lesson only, but the Teacher! If every saint be called to wear His yoke, what is it but to be in

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devoted service, each according to his several ability, to Him who “emptied himself, taking a bondsman’s form?” And how important that we should see that we are not even qualified to give a cup of cold water in His name, for we do not know *how* to do even that, unless we have learned it from Himself. Yet if no higher thing than that be the *measure* of my service, how precious it becomes in His sight if the *manner* of my doing it be in some degree an expression of the exquisite grace which characterised His lovely ways! Unquestioning obedience, unqualified subjection, untiring service; such is the incomparable lesson, the yoke of Christ. But how much more incomparable the Teacher. Did I but learn *what* the lesson is, it would be the letter which kills; it is only the Spirit which quickens. Now the Lord is that Spirit, and, learning from Him, I become like Him, fitted for His service here, as for His presence *there in the fast-coming glory*.

This brings us to the third, the superlative thing, *following Him*. Ser-

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vice is not the first thing, nor the last, nor the highest—would that we remembered it. A blessed thing is service, and a necessary. The glory of Christ and the need of souls call for it, and loyalty to Him with devotedness to His interests will make it imperative to the loving and exercised heart. As he said, “If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” But if it be not preceded by feeding upon Him, connected with learning from Him and accompanied by following after Him, such service will never have real fragrance as a sweet odour of Christ, however high it may stand or fair it may look in the estimation of men. The Lord’s first word to Philip was, “Follow me;” His last to Peter was, “Follow thou me;” while to all who waited upon His word He said, “If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be.” Herein may be found the key to all real growth and all true service. Why are so many ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth? Let scripture

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itself answer : “ Then shall we know if we *follow on to know the Lord* ; his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

Why is there so much defective service, and so little in which He can take His unqualified delight, but that there is so little practical following Him ?

In conclusion, let us look for a moment at an Old Testament worthy, one of God’s warriors of three and thirty centuries ago, and see how the Holy Ghost gives testimony to devoted faithfulness. Joshua xiv. records of Caleb three times over that he *wholly followed* the Lord his God ! And it takes care to mark, too, his patient continuance in well-doing. In the beginning of his course he could say, through grace, that he wholly followed the Lord his God, and Moses strictly confirmed his words. Now after five-and-forty years of the trial of his patience, the Spirit of God places upon record that these words were as true of him as ever—he wholly followed the Lord his God ! How

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brightly do the energy of faith and the whole-hearted devotedness of this ancient witness shine forth from the inspired page to cheer and stimulate the saints of God in this day. When all Israel sunk down in unbelief and unfaithfulness, he was one of that little "two or three" company that held fast "to God and the word of his grace." None will deny to Joshua that as the leader of an elect people into the land of God's promise, he was a divinely-honoured type of Christ. Nor is it too much to say that in Caleb we see a typical or representative saint; he was distinguished for faith and steadfastness; for patience and endurance; conflict and victory; one who a rich receiver, was a no less bounteous giver! (Josh. xv. 19.) What follows in Joshua xiv. gives us the signal result of wholly following the Lord, 1st. There was no declension. He was as strong after five-and-forty years of faithful testimony, as on the first moment that he started for the land as one of the twelve; he had proved that he was able to endure hardness.

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2nd. He was of good courage, fully prepared to meet the Lord's enemies if only He were with him, saying, as it were, "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power." 3rd. Where there is faithfulness there shall be peace: "The land had rest from war." 4th. He not only got the land, but a special portion in the land. Hebron, the scene of the most remarkable events in the history of the family of faith, and thus of special interest to Jehovah-Himself, the city of the valley of Eshcol became his perpetual inheritance, according to the Lord's word of promise. Were every leader a Joshua and every saint a Caleb, what a testimony would the church of God afford!

May He give us in this terrible day of declension fuller purpose of heart to be overcomers for His name, coveting for ourselves and for one another, the precious testimony that Caleb got who followed the Lord wholly.

W. R.

D.

THE SPIES AND THE LAND.

“AN exceeding good land” are the words wherewith the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, described the land of Canaan, amid the complaints and murmurs of their brethren; and who can deny their application to the land beyond Jordan—the place of promise and rest for Jehovah’s chosen people? Yet not only did they bear testimony to the land, but as regards the competency of Israel to take possession of it, this is their witness—“we are *well able* to overcome it”—and further, “if *the Lord delight* in us then he will bring us into the land and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.” (Num. xiii. 30, xiv. 8.) Now this Canaan was a type of the *present*, not the *future* heaven—a type of that sphere into which faith is conducted to-day and where it finds all its rest, joys and satisfaction. True, we are still as to our natural life, in this world, and we are called to pass through it as strangers; the cloud and the manna, defining our path as well as sustaining

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us in it. How blessed to think of this ! If it were but adopted, how it would dispose of the many anxieties and cares which alas, too often weigh down the heart.

But life in Canaan is not traversing the wilderness, however true and faithful we may be in it, neither is it the needful and salutary exercises of heart and lessons of the way. Now as regards this land of promise, it is very instructive to see the manner of its description in the book of Deuteronomy, because it equally applies to that place *above* where our Saviour is, and where alone true rest and satisfaction can be found. It will be found then that the description is twofold, namely, in Deuteronomy viii. it is described in its own essential excellencies, and they are of such an order as to place those brought into that land in a condition of absolute independence in the right and true use of the term—"without scarceness" and no lack of anything in it. Is it possible to overestimate or unduly to magnify the richness of such "an exceeding good land" ? and may I ask if Canaan as an

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earthly rest and portion was all that to Jehovah's ancient people, is not heaven, the place "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," as rich a possession and as satisfying a rest for faith to-day? Is it not sorrowful to think that there are many hearts who are contented with having heaven as a reported region of *future and postponed* enjoyment? consequently they never really retire from earth in heart or affection, and while never rising beyond the wilderness in experience, they never really possess faith or power to carry them even through it according to the mind and thoughts of God. Alas! that it should be so.

But we find that in chapter xi., this goodly land is described in its comparative and contrasted excellencies; in Egypt, anxiety and trouble were evinced around its river, the great source of fertility and refreshment; sowing and watering in the land of bondage, tell their own tale. In Canaan on the contrary, it was drinking water of the rain of heaven, being cared for by the Lord Himself, His eyes resting upon

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that bright and blessed country from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year ; and such, though in a far more perfect way, is that place into which the blessed Spirit leads faith in conscious realisation and enjoyment to-day. Who can fully or adequately portray the light and glory of that scene where Christ is ? It is *from thence* a true estimate of all things here is obtained, as well as *from thence* comes all true energy and divine power to surmount the various hindrances in our way ; we are never really true to our calling in the wilderness, until we have found a home in heaven and from thence come back as it were, to be practically heavenly strangers in a land that is not ours.

Now when we go to the book of Numbers to where we find Israel on the eve of leaving the wilderness, and entering this goodly land, we are met with one or two striking and solemn facts, which are not without a significant voice for us to-day. In Numbers xiii. is recorded the mission of the

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twelve spies and the searching of the land—they were sent, they went up, and searched the land, and this is their report, “ We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it”—exhibiting at the same time a branch with one cluster of grapes borne between two upon a staff, as well as pomegranates and figs; what could have been more convincing or assuring? Yet in the face of all this, arises the wildest outburst of unbelief on the part of ten of these spies, ending with their evil report of the land and the most solemn and rebellious murmuring of Israel. Observe there was no question as to the beauty and fertility of the land in itself; still the purport of their witness and report, save Joshua and Caleb, was to deter the people from going up and possessing it. And has not this a solemn counterpart in the history of many at the present time? Verily the history of the ten spies is being repeated in this day; the truth as to the Christian’s heavenly *position* and

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relationships is admitted, because it is impossible honestly to deny it; but the unbelief which marked the spies, is as prevalent to-day, and as they sought to hinder Israel by mapping out their evil report, so has it been attempted in this day to deter souls from entering in and spiritually possessing what divine goodness and grace has made theirs. It is striking to see how set against the mind of God at any given moment, the enemy is; in the wilderness while on the very borders I may say of Canaan, he will have tools for his object in the ten spies, while on the other side of Jordan and in the land, he will seek to accomplish the same purpose and present the same testimony in the two-and-a-half tribes. May the Lord awaken up His saints to the design of the enemy, and in His grace preserve us not only from being deceived and robbed of our blessing, but also from becoming the tools of the enemy for this end.

It is very cheering to see in the end of this record of the searching of the land, how the faithful in such a moment

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will rise to the height of their calling and openly assert it, and this was the case with Joshua and Caleb in their day ; and beautiful was their testimony. It amounted to this : Jehovah's heart and hand were enough to lead His people into the land of His choice for them, and so is it with faith now, unbelief may minutely portray its evil report by mapping out the difficulties and dangers, but the Joshuas and Calebs of to-day will be only the more manifested as each such crisis declares itself. May the Lord grant to all His beloved saints more grace and faith, boldly and fearlessly to put the soles of their feet upon what He has so graciously made ours—may no evil report of the land, however speciously given, deter them from practically going up ; and may there be raised up many true-hearted ones who will stand up earnestly and faithfully at this time, for the true calling and testimony of the saints, and by their practical heavenly ways, as well as by their lips and pens, encourage the hearts of their brethren in this day of trial and difficulty. W. T. T.

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rejection is told, though in connection with man's responsibility), we find that although John affirms this responsibility in his teaching, he presents to us the sovereign grace, which as we have already seen, sought His sheep amidst Jews and Gentiles, in order to give them eternal life. Finally we must not let pass without remarking the fact that in John's Gospel all is individual; he does not speak of the church.

WHERE THOU DIEST WILL I DIE.

THERE is a wonderful difference between being a widow and having a widowed heart. Orpah gives us the former, and her daughters are many; Ruth the latter, and her daughters how few! For in one sense every believer is a widow, from the fact that the Lord has died out of the scene. Such was Orpah, but Ruth was a widow indeed. In the first chapter of the book of Ruth we have two closely allied things—the widowed heart, and its only adequate sequence, the refused scene. The desire

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of her eyes was gone, and thenceforth everything around was enveloped in the folds of that dark pall which death had cast over her heart. The fairest fields and loveliest spots were wrapped in the shadow of death to her afflicted spirit. Let her eye range where it would over the plains of Moab, it saw only blank desolation, for Mahlon was not !

Thus, when Naomi the Jewess, more bereaved than herself, sought to return from the land of her adoption, because "the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread," Ruth clave unto her who is no longer Naomi ("pleasant") but Mara ("bitter"). She refused the scene of every earthly happiness and every earthly tie, and accepted the bitterness, saying, as David said, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." What could alleviate such desolation ; what could assuage such grief ? Yet how blessed of Him who dug those deep channels in her heart that His love might flow therein in fuller volume. And how gracious to bring in the necessary and fitting discipline for "the un-

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searchable riches of Christ," to which her faith was conducting her.

Reader, have you a widowed heart, and have you therefore refused the scene of your earthly joys, and accepted the bitter waters of Marah, the sentence of death in yourself that you should not trust in yourself, but in God, that raiseth the dead? "Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." (Luke v. 34, 35.) The world has quenched the light of our eyes in the waters of death. Seeing, then, that the scene has refused our Lord, we refuse the scene. Henceforth, seeing Him only by faith, we follow Him whither He has gone, accepting meanwhile the fasting and the bitterness in the scene of His refusal.

"Farewell, farewell, poor faithless world,
With all thy boasted store;
I'd not have joy where *He* had woe—
Be rich where *He* was poor,"

WHERE THOU DIEST WILL I DIE. 113

In the second chapter we have a new and exalted object in a new and fruitful scene! Bethlehem, or the "house of bread," is reached in the beginning of barley harvest, and Boaz, the mighty man of wealth, and a kinsman, is owner of the field. He follows Ruth with his eye, and gets speech of her. He gives her title to favours and benefits; the field and the vessels are unreservedly open to her. Tenderly and graciously does he take knowledge of the maiden, an exile in a strange country, commending that devotedness which had cost her the surrender of her father, her mother, and the land of her nativity, to cast in her lot with an unknown people. And then breaks forth that sublime benediction, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." And what was this *work* for which a full reward was to follow, even a recompense from Jehovah? Nothing whatever but that break with the world which her widowed heart, because it was widowed, had

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found so easy to make, but in which she was to learn that she had made the lucrative exchange of mere temporal mercies for the everlasting wings of the Lord God of Israel! As also in the forty-fifth Psalm, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is the Lord; and worship thou him." Beautifully does Boaz conduct her, as it were, unto Jehovah, installing her under His shelter, the wing of infinite love and omnipotent power, bespeaking for her a bounteous blessing. Thus he touched the spring in her heart. "Then she said, Let me find favour in *thy* sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken *unto the heart* (see margin) of thine handmaiden, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens." A new, and suited, and exalted object has met her gaze, and revealed himself unto her heart, as she confesses in this simple strain,

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And is it not truly, and more truly so with us? For the corn of wheat having fallen into the ground and died, is Lord of the harvest now, and is even now meeting the widowed heart in His "house of bread," the new scene, to be a new object to that heart for ever. And when His servants have ended all His harvest, then shall our heart be widowed no longer, for He will openly play the part of our kinsman-redeemer, and He who, in His grace, met us as a fugitive, shall present us to Himself as His bride, in heavenly beauty and eternal glory!

W. R.

D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

FAITH AND SENSE.

THERE have been, as far as we know, always two lights, since the call of Abram, or since a definite path was prescribed for the people of God on the earth, one of faith, and the other of sense. There have been two companies,

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purpose of heart to walk by faith, though its feebleness were apparent, yet there would be strength within, and true co-operation one with another, and a marked advance in the knowledge of God. Whereas now, those who seek to lay hold by faith of God's purpose and calling, are baffled and hindered by their companions, who cannot accept nor engage in anything beyond the range of their senses; who in heart, if not in word, ridicule the idea of being a heavenly people; who regard the church more as an enclosure for converted souls, than as the vessel of testimony in the earth, and consequently, that evangelising is the one great work on which all the energies of every believer ought to be expended, and thus the great aim and testimony for the believer now is overlooked and supplanted. There is no opportunity nor time, as it were, to teach and lead on souls to maintain that the state Christ is in is our state in this world, and the place He is in is our place, though still on earth; that the one simple calling of the church is, that by each

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member of Christ's body here He should be set forth, and magnified where He is not.

“HE ABODE TWO DAYS STILL IN
THE SAME PLACE.”

John xi.

The truest heart that ever loved,
Could give its object pain,
Could bear to see the suffering,
That brought the untold gain.

The Mightiest Hand that ever moved,
Could *wait* to bring relief,
“Two days” apparent heedlessness,
Of nature's deepest grief.

Would they have missed that sacred thing,
His sympathy—His tears,
Scene on which breaking hearts have leaned,
For eighteen hundred years ?

The wonder-working word that gave,
Their loved one back again,
Seems scarce so precious as the groan
That proved He shared their pain.

Oh ! heart that loves so perfectly !
Thou often waitest still,
And blessed are the emptied hearts,
Thy sympathy can fill.

O. R. 1877.

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FRAGMENT.

“Lord, *if it be Thou*, bid me come unto thee.” You cannot get on at all unless you have Christ before your soul. That is the greatest proof to me, that we are on divine ground, the confusion we get into when the eye is off Christ. We have left the boat. We have Christ and the Spirit, but no boat; the port is in view if we have not gone to sleep. We have nothing but Christ, and if our eye is off Him, we cannot walk at all. When the Lord went into the ship, that is a figure of what it will be when He joins His earthly people; all their trouble will be over; they worship Him as Son of God. But in the meantime, what a beautiful picture it is of our present position! We cannot get on unless our eyes are fixed on Christ. That is a proof that the place we are in is a divinely ordered place. It is the right place to get your feet upon the water, but you cannot walk on it if your eye is off Christ.

R. E.

J O H N'S G O S P E L.

Chapter iv.

AFTER the introductory chapters, the Gospel of John begins to shew us Jesus leaving the Jewish capital, the centre of God's earthly government, the ancient seat of Him who, now come down in grace, could not find where to lay His head in an adverse world. The jealousy of the Pharisees was the cause of Jesus' departure. But here already we perceive that the Lord (having the consciousness of an origin and object which went beyond all the thoughts even of those who had received Him), does not Himself act to gather those who received His word, according to the thoughts of the disciples who surrounded Him in love: Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples. As the Word made flesh, Son of God, Saviour of the world, Redeemer, Son of man, He could not baptise people in order to attach them to Himself as Messiah, although He possessed this title; for

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this entrance is the conscience. “Go, call thine husband.” Then, upon her answer, the Lord tells enough of her story to the woman to give her to understand that she has to do with Him before whom all things are naked and laid bare.

WHO ARE WITNESSES IN THIS DAY ?

WE readily accept that God has ever had a line of witnesses for Himself since revelation began. If God reveals Himself He also raises up His witnesses answering to the revelation He has made. This might be easily traced back to the beginning. A certain line of testimony began with Abel ; distinctly another with Noah ; a third with Abram ; again another with Moses ; others succeeded these and now we have the church's line of testimony rapidly drawing to its close, and may we not fittingly ask, Who

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are now its witnesses ? This latest line of testimony began in the blood of "thy martyr [or witness] Stephen," and became identified with the apostles Peter and Paul, its pioneers, each of whom is termed a "witness," compare Acts xxii. 15 and 1 Peter v. 1 ; see also Acts i. 8, where the same term is applied to all the apostles.

The men of faith recorded in Hebrews xi. are summed up in the next chapter as "so great a cloud of witnesses." The Lord Himself was God's "faithful and true Witness," and "The Holy Ghost also is a witness." (Heb. x. 15 ; 3 John 6 ; Acts xx. 23 ; John xv. 26, 27.)

It must needs be, then, that God has His witnesses not only as to the general testimony of the church, but as to that special line of truth He has graciously revived to His saints in these closing days. And be it remarked that this is quite another thing to our having accepted this testimony. I may have been really reached by it, and have become a vessel charged with its benefits, and yet have never been its witness. A witness,

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it must be evident, is not merely one who has come within the scope of the revelation given, and has possessed himself of the blessing it carries with it, but is formed and controlled by its irresistible power. Whatever be the testimony, he who receiveth it has set to his seal that God is true and his faith thus secures to him the blessing it conveys. But the witness is one who is identified with "the testimony of the Lord" in an essentially higher way. He is one whose soul that testimony saturates and whose heart that testimony ingrains. He and it are radically one, incorporated as it were together; like the hand of the standard-bearer which had so grasped the staff upon which the standard waved, that when it was forced from his grip the skin of his palm was found to have been inseparably driven into the pores of the wood and was left adhering to it.

In Acts xxii. 14, 15 we see how God constituted Paul a witness, and though we know what a special and pre-eminent line of service was that of this beloved servant, yet we need not therefore miss

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the application to ourselves, through His grace who has called us also.

1st. "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee." He was a chosen vessel. It had pleased God to separate him from his mother's womb, calling him by His grace, and revealing His Son in him. The sovereignty of God stands as the first and primary element. No real witness in this day will deny or decry the distinct calling of God in the sovereignty of His grace, to specific identification with the testimony, for as surely as were the fathers chosen of God and called by Him, has He His chosen and called witnesses to-day.

2nd. "That thou shouldest know his will." How few and how simple these words, but how pregnant in their import. What a wonderful moral qualification, as distinguished from an intellectual one, is found here. So Paul prayed for his Colossians, "filled with the knowledge of his will." If we look around to-day among the thousands who have been reached by His grace, how few we find towards whom our hearts turn with

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happy confidence as convinced they have possession of His will, being really conversant with it. Not merely knowing His word or understanding the meaning of scripture, for there was never more of that while perhaps there was never less of the knowledge of His will, the practical "understanding what the will of the Lord is." Eph. v. 17.

3rd. "And see that Just One." Peter in the third chapter; Stephen in the eighth chapter, and Paul here, all speak of the Lord by this title, a title only applied to Him as the glorified Man. Stephen the proto-martyr at the close of his testimony, short and brilliant; Paul at the beginning of his, long and laborious; alike blessed witnesses for Christ, and not counting their lives dear unto them, each beheld the Man in glory, the Christ of God, the Holy and the True, who was God's faithful Witness when Himself in the path of testimony. Nor less truly had Peter come in for a share in the grandeur of such a sight when the moment of his own incaution in reducing that Just One

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to the level of Moses and Elias, became the Father's opportunity for witnessing, upon the Holy mount and from the excellent glory, of His own good pleasure in His incarnate Son, God manifest in flesh. For us the beatific vision awaits our being glorified together with Him ; but in another way, that is morally and to faith, it is surely opened up to our spiritual perception now, and without it we can never in any adequate sense be His witnesses here.

Lastly, "And shouldest hear the voice of his mouth." Observe it is the *voice* of His mouth. Not His words only, nor even the knowledge of His will, though that be vastly more ; but what is a deeper and a dearer thing, the accents of His own voice be speaking that intimacy with Himself which is promoted and cemented thereby. The voice is pre-eminently a personal thing. The same words may be on the lips of others, but from His lips alone can come forth the voice which is peculiar to Himself, as says the bride in the Canticles, "the voice of my beloved !" How often we

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hear His words, and yet have sorrowfully to confess that through the strife of tongues around or the wretched insensitiveness of our own souls, we catch not "the voice of his mouth." But the witness hears His *voice*; its varied tones are the music of his exercised heart, and its deep and tender cadence an undying melody to his spirit.

Thus qualified the witness gives forth his testimony of what he has "*seen*"—the Just One, the glorified Man, the Christ in glory; and of what he has "*heard*" from Him, His present mind. Filled with the knowledge of His will, he is also formed by intimacy with Himself to give forth instinctively what is nearest to His heart. He may be hated of all men for His name's sake; He may be deserted as Paul was of all those who were in Asia, the field of his energetic and self-denying labours, and he may have to say "though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Yea, none may stand by him when he has to "answer" the lion, and only Timothy be "like-minded" with him, yet in him

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alone we see the full characteristics of a model witness for Christ—an all but perfect specimen of what His heart is seeking for in these closing days of testimony to Himself.

As an apostle Paul had *no* successors; as a witness how few !

W. R.

D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

CHURCH LAXITY.

THE church testimony is so entirely new, distinct from, and unconnected with, any of God's previous dealings with man, that there can be no departure from its principles without a surrender of it either from ignorance or unbelief. The testimony which embodies the completion of the word of God, and, consequent on the rejection of the Son of God, must be so unique that only the Spirit of God can lead or keep one in accordance with it. Hence any independent action must hinder or subvert it. In all previous testimonies

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We may here remark that our Gospel speaks of the revelation of the Father in the Son; of God's nature; of God as the object of worship; of eternal life; of that which reaches the conscience; but not of that which purifies it. This last subject is not treated in John's Gospel, for John speaks of the revelation of God the Father in the Son; of a revelation which must end in judgment on those who reject it, and whose purpose is grace: it is the Son of God in the world, come to reveal His God and Father, and as eternal life. At the end of the gospel, the Holy Ghost is introduced in the place of the Son, that we may know Him (the Son) as a glorified Man in heaven, at the right hand of God.

WHAT IS IT TO FOLLOW THE LORD?

At a time like the present, when laxity in relation to Christ is the rule, and faithfulness the exception, the con-

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sideration of such a question as this cannot be out of place.

It is to be feared that, notwithstanding high pretensions as to keeping His word and not denying His name, indifference to both is on the increase, scrupulous obedience is at a discount, and separated ones in *form* are even beginning to deride and reproach the few that are separated in *fact*, the few that are seeking, as Caleb and Joshua did in a day of universal defection, to *follow the Lord wholly*.

It is a serious thing, deeply, solemnly significant. We are not in darkness, we even acknowledge ourselves recipients of special light. The very position we occupy in the church of God is characterised by an unprecedented advance in knowledge, by acquaintance with the heavenly place, and character, and walk of the believer; by having gone forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach. We are gathered to His name, having Him in our midst. We occupy ecclesiastical ground as thus gathered which we feel justified in

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calling *divine*; owning the risen Lord as Head of the church, and that church as His body on the earth, and the Holy Ghost as down here indwelling the church. Surely if any are to be found following the Lord in these days, those thus characterised should be the ones. But is it so? Alas, how painfully evident it is that with many of us the character of the *place* we have taken affects but little our own character and course. What I desire to press is that nothing less than following Him will suffice, either for the Lord, or for the testimony He has committed to us as His witnesses on the earth.

We need not hesitate then to take up this question, in dependence upon the Lord, and looking to His word for guidance. The fact that we have such frequent reference to it in scripture, that it so directly involves the glory of God and the honour of the name of Christ, that popular notions about it and current phraseology are so pitifully low and imperfect, that the christian mind generally is so willing to accept any

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feeble imitation of it instead of the thing itself, and that the consequences of a mistake maintained to the end are absolutely irreparable ; all this should make us intensely anxious to get at the *truth* about it, and to do anything in our power to dissipate the errors, and remove the ignorance which prevail on every hand.

Where, I would ask, do we find such strange misconceptions on the subject of what following really is, as in the church of God ? Look at political or military, at scholastic or scientific spheres. Do men of the world, who accept leaderships in these things, attach the same meagre and meaningless notions to it that Christians do in relation to the leadership of Christ ? Surely "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," more thorough, more real, more bent on practical and profitable results. Their following is following ; and anything short of that is regarded as an abandonment of the position, and treated accordingly. With

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us, alas, how many unworthy counterfeits are allowed to pass for the real thing! Piety, zeal, service, liberality, or even profession itself are often presented, if not paraded, as following the Lord! But we may rely upon it that, however these things may satisfy man, God is not satisfied with them, "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi.)

What is needed is: *an exercised conscience—an undivided heart—and divine principles.*

I must first have it out with *myself*: my conscience must be exercised. Am I one of the Lord's, and yet not even *professing* to follow Him? Surely this will never do. Well then, am I *desirous* of following the Lord, and purposing to begin? If so, we will seek help from the word of God presently. Or am I content with being saved, thinking only of *getting* as much as I can out of the crucified Christ, "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,"

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now, and heaven at last? Have I hitherto left the cross He bequeathed me untouched, His blessed Person unknown and unloved, His "word" unstudied, thinking little or nothing of giving Him joy, and of bringing glory to His name? Surely if this be the state of things disclosed, the sooner I cry vehemently to God the better. I need to feel in my inmost soul the power of that solemn word, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v.)

And what then? Once aroused to a sense of my own failure and of His claims; conscience no longer slumbering, but in real earnest now; the heart also won over to Him and constrained by His love, so that I can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire before thee." (Ps. lxxiii.) Having thus an *undivided heart* for Christ, there remains but one thing more, and that is, the attainment of *divine principles*, the thoughts of *God* as to the path in which

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alone the Lord can be followed, the *truth* of the matter, not as passing through any human filter, nor moderated by conference with flesh and blood, nor modified and flavoured by earthly considerations, but pure and simple as gathered from "the sincere milk of the word." Let us look at this for a moment.

"Following" is simply going behind a person in the same direction ; and when connected with "the Lord," doing this in a spirit of loving obedience. In most cases a word is used which gives us merely the idea of going behind ; but sometimes another word, having the signification of "imitating" is made use of, as in 1 Corinthians iv. 16, and xi. 1, "Be ye imitators of me." So also Ephesians v. 1, "Be ye imitators of God ;" and in 1 Thessalonians i. 6 ; "Ye became imitators of us," and in ii. 14, "imitators of the churches of God ;" and so in other places. The other word, however, is more commonly used ; as when in Matthew viii. 19, "a certain scribe said, Master, I will *follow*

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thee whithersoever thou goest;" and in verse 22, the Lord said, "*Follow* me, and let the dead bury their dead;" and in the next verse, "His disciples *followed* him." So in Luke v. in response to the Lord's "Follow me," Levi left all, rose up, "and *followed* him." The same word is used in Matthew xvi., Mark viii., and Luke ix., where conditions of discipleship, three in one and one in three, are solemnly and authoritatively laid down by the Lord Himself. "Whosoever will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow me*." Peter too tells us that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should *follow* his steps." So that what the Spirit of God teaches us, as to "following the Lord," is that we go behind Him, "in the path which his footsteps have marked as his own," imitating Him in all His ways and walk, as a Son, a Servant, a Sufferer, and a Witness for the truth. Here we find *divine principles*.

Observe, *we go behind Him* ; we take

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the place of subjection, obedience, dependence. No room for self in any of its forms. He leads the way; I go behind, always, in everything, at any cost. *I--follow--Him.*

Oh, what mighty changes this one thought alone involves! Why is it not accepted? Because it *does* involve such changes. The flesh cannot stand *that*; and yet, not being willing to give up the name, a compromise is effected, which may answer a *present* purpose, but will certainly be manifested as what it really is when the end comes. What a solemn thing to do! sail under false colours, keep back part of the price, receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God! "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi.)

Observe again, *we share His experience.* What was that? What indeed!

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“Who hath believed our report?” Looking at things as they are, who would suppose His was a bitter cup, a rugged road, a solitary path! He could say, “They have hated me without a cause.” “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

Is *that* the One whom men are now following, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day! Are they with mitred heads and costly robes, with titles, rank, and vast emolument, pillars of the world, are they the followers of the Lord? But even as to ourselves, however small a place we may occupy in this great Babylon, let us remember that no follower of Christ can be found there! We speak not of saved ones, but of followers. “For what concord hath Christ with Belial?” Nay, more; if He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, *so must His followers be*; for they

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share His experience, and that was *His* experience.

Again, if we are following Him *we take up His interests and make them our own*; His plans, His purposes, His pursuits. We are identified with Him in the one great end He had in view from the first, "to do thy will, O God." We are associated with Him who *came* not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. It is a great thing to feel at heart that Christ's *interests* are really mine; that I have taken them up in the place where He is not, and that I have to pursue them even as He did.

Thirdly, as followers of Him we adopt *His views, His judgments, His decisions*, on all matters and things. We have none of our own. We repudiate ourselves. We are fools, He is our wisdom. We bow to Him as an absolute authority. We surrender our own judgments to Him, and follow through fire and through water, through tunnel and tempest, in the simple confidence that He cannot mislead. *This is following, and nothing else is!*

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In fact, everything we have and are is lost in Him. He is our only Standard, our Touchstone, our Test. By Him everything is estimated, and either accepted or rejected.

In brief, may we not find a concise answer to our question in four words easily remembered: to follow Christ is to stand, to serve, to suffer, and to sacrifice for Him?

My *standing* for Christ in a scene like this, and in a day like this, will embrace separation from evil, consecration to God, and testimony for Christ.

My *serving* will involve my labouring for Him who is not personally in the scene of His labour, and who looks to me to act on His behalf in His absence; and is distinctly connected with following, in the words, "If any man serve me let him follow me."

My *suffering* is inevitable if I follow the Lord; "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) This has been proved ever "since the beginning of the gospel

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of Jesus Christ ;” and though not proved by *blood* now as in earlier days, it is as true now as then : for *whenever* faithfulness is intolerable, suffering is inevitable.

My *sacrificing* is essential, for I must be stripped of every impediment, surrendering the world, refusing the flesh, acting as the Lord’s bondsman, “not my own, but bought with a price.”

And above all, let us remember that love for the Lord Himself, “because he first loved us,” lies at the root of it all. Judas followed Him, but never loved Him ; and we see the end of that. The rest, we are told, were faithful unto death, and laid down their lives for Him.

May we too have this love for Him, our blessed Lord, and grace to refuse everything that is not in harmony with Him, everything that is not distinctly *for Him* ; and thus, not only “dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God,” but with “the world crucified unto me, and I unto the world,” *by His cross*, I know and shew what it is “to follow the Lord,”

ANON,

MOULDED OR MODIFIED.

ABRAHAM'S life was moulded by the truth he had received. It made the channel in which the stream of his life ran. What explained his wandering life was the word of God. To the Canaanites it must have been a riddle to have seen a great prince a houseless wanderer. Such a mystery the life of faith must always be to the natural man. It is foolishness to him. To us, through grace, the patriarch's life is simple and beautiful. He was *formed* by the word of God. He had his failures, but the framework of his life—what made him the kind of man that he was—was his divine commission. Faith was the power, the word was the guide, and he was called the friend of God.

In Lot we see a man who was modified by the word, not moulded. His life was moulded by worldly principles. He took in the main the course his neighbours took. If a good opening

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occurred for getting on he embraced it. But the truth kept him. He was practically "that righteous man," but the course of his life was not framed by the word of God.

Now is not this often the case with us? We are kept from sin by the word, but our lives are not framed by it. The main channel they run in they would have run in had there been no redemption, and no Christ to obey, or to follow. M.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

"WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND."

THERE is nothing more generally admitted than that the right way to do anything is not as ready to the hand as the wrong; that we do the wrong very naturally, as it were, but that it requires education and experience to secure the right way in the most ordinary matters of life. Now if it be necessary for man's own things that the prudent should look well to his way, how much

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more must it be in things of God! We can never forget that the knowledge of good came in by doing evil. This has introduced into human society a priority of evil. It takes the lead. No doubt there is a good to overcome it, but the evil is first with man, and the nature of it is not discovered but as good is acquired. No one knows the nature of evil but as he knows good. In natural things man, according to his cultivation and ability, sought to attain to a standard of his own. His ideal was what he called 'good,' and hence as the ideal was increased, so was the contrary to it refused. This is really human refinement, founded on conscience and progress. This does not reach beyond man's conscience, and yet it discloses that evil is the dominant thing here, and that there is only progress as evil is overcome, even to the measure of man's sensibility, as when Adam and Eve were first aware that evil had not only overpowered them, but that they must be screened from the sense of it. A measure of good

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thanks unto Him, and spake of Him unto all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. The widow who consecrated all her living for the temple is recognised and commended by Him above all the others who "of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God." (Luke xxi. 3, 4.) If I am where His heart is, I must find out wisdom's ways. The Lord give us the devotedness that says, "Entreat me not to leave thee, to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people, my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried."

FRAGMENT.

ABSOLUTE consecration to God is the strongest bond between human hearts. It strips them of self, and they have but one soul in thought, intent, and settled purpose, because they have only one object.

J O H N'S G O S P E L.

Chapter iv. 27-54.

WE find an example of the isolated state in which the Lord lived, in the total want of intelligence in the disciples, when the Lord opens His heart in the joy that the prospect of the conversion of sinners gave Him; and He speaks to them of the fruit of His ministry. Except the communion with His Father, which He always enjoyed, the Lord had no joy upon earth but in the activity of His love; in the good that He did: that was worthy of God. Perfect in His communion with God on high, yet truly man, and exercising His love down here, He went about doing good. His whole life was thus made up, except the sufferings He endured at the hand of men, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was not without human affection: He loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus; He loved the apostle who wrote this Gospel; but this does not come out till His hour has

DECLENSION.

“Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. . . . And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. . . . For the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.”—
JEREMIAH II. 12, 13, 18, 19, 37.

THIS language of the prophet strikingly sets forth the source and progress of Israel's decline; and the remarkable apostrophe to the heavens with which it is introduced indicates Jehovah's depth of feeling as to that sinful nation, whom He nevertheless, once and again, calls “My people.” Surely there is a voice therein for us, for divine principles are unchangeable. May the Holy Ghost give the application.

Two evils, says Jehovah, have My

DECLENSION.

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people committed. First, "they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters." Here is the real origin of all decline--the heart's turning away from its divine Object. Fearlessly may it be asserted that all declension in the church of God is traceable to this one cause--Christ has not that place before the heart which once He had; as in the case of Ephesus, "thou hast left thy first love!" He may have a prominent, even a pre-eminent, place, but it can no longer be said, "Christ is *everything*" (literally all things). (Col. iii. 11.) Let the reader acknowledge, as surely he will, that decline has invariably its root there, and that there is no possibility of recovering lost ground but in a return to the point of departure. Ephesus was entreated to remember *from whence* she had fallen, to repent, and do the first works. Preliminary to retracing her steps, it was essential she should recognise the depth of her decline, as measured by the elevation which had been hers when her exalted Object had His true place before her. This can

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never be accurately gauged save where an adequate discovery is made of the distance that has arisen between one's own heart and Him. What must Jehovah have felt when He said, "My people have forsaken me"? It is only when we appreciate the distance we have created between Himself and us that we get the ground cleared, and the way opened, for real return to Him who is "the fountain of living waters."

This brings us to the second evil—My people have "hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Nothing can be more essentially contrasted than a fountain and a cistern. A natural fountain—for that is the thought—is entirely of God; it gushes forth from the rock or the earth by virtue of its own native, vital force. No human hand could produce or restrain it. The living waters burst their bounds, to expand themselves in ever-flowing freshness and unimpaired fullness. That is the true idea of a fountain. A cistern, on the contrary, is a human construction, a piece of masonry, alto-

gether of man, and not of God, and its water as dead and stagnant as itself. Then, too, these cisterns which His people had hewn out for themselves were broken, and would hold no water. Yet for these had they forsaken Him! Chapter xviii. supplies a kindred scripture: "Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Because my people hath forgotten me." The snow which fell in winter, accumulating in the deep ravines of mountainous Lebanon, never wholly disappearing, seems to express the refreshing coolness and copiousness of those waters which Israel was forsaking. And how much more than all this is the living word of God "as cold waters to a thirsty soul." But let us give heed that they spring from the Fountain, and are not drawn from the cistern. You cannot sever the word from Him whose

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word it is, and not lose its freshness or its force. Divest it of its living contact with Christ, the ascended and glorified One, and it is the letter which killeth, rather than the spirit which giveth life. The Fountain *gives forth* its waters, and so indeed have we the active ministry of Christ Himself, as the Head in glory, in the grace of His own person, to His members on earth. "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." (Ps. cxxxiii.) "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. . . . The Lord gave the word." (Ps. lxviii. 9-11.)

How often do saints neglect the ministry of the word and the preaching of the gospel, saying, "Oh! I have my Bible and nice books, and I know all that I should hear. Again, a contrary evil prevails: the gifts are exalted, as

though all blessing depended upon them, and they must have place given irrespective of their moral condition ("Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord"), and of their relation to their brethren. In each case alike the cardinal thing is forgotten, that all true blessing now is from Christ in glory, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, and it runs not in ratio to the degree of gift that is in exercise, but to the degree in which there is a direct ministry by Christ, through whomsoever He will of what is on His heart for those who are its object, the church which is His body. Remarkable may be the gift displayed, and the truth as orthodox as it is erudite, and as polished as it is profound, but if not directly bounding out from the Fountain, whence can be its source but some receptacle which a man has hewn out for himself, and whence no living waters have ever yet condescended to flow? Surely he who has drunk long and deep of the sweetness of the living waters will have no taste for the stale; habituated to

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slake his thirst at the fertilising spring, he will refuse the stagnant stores of the cistern, if haply there be any to draw. For, in truth, the living waters cannot be stored; attempting this is rudimentary declension. He who would override his brethren by means of his gift, his acquired knowledge of truth, his ability in service and the like, and equally they who are carried away by these things, are on the slippery descent. Thus, as to the manna, the hand that gathered and the Hand that gave must be in close affinity, and when it lost that heavenly bloom which survived but for the day, it bred worms, and stank. Bereft of its celestial beauty and freshness, it was only fit for the dunghill. Has it not a voice for us, in a day when acquired truth is so traded on and trusted to, the soul meanwhile running dry?

But there is another step in declension—"And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? Thine own wickedness

DECLENSION.

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shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee : know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." This is a positive going back to the world. Failing in the effort to store the living waters, finding a leak in every fleshly cistern they had hewn, there is now the deep decline to earthly streams. The rivers of Egypt and Assyria are resorted to, the slimy waters of the Nile and the rapid current of the Euphrates ; in other words, a more or less open indulgence in that which suits and satisfies man in power on the earth.

These successive steps exhibit the very converse of the growth and progress of truth in the soul. For in Christianity we not only (1) drink of the spring, God Himself the fountain of living waters, and there everlastingly quench our thirst, but (2) the hidden well is within us, the Holy Ghost in person, springing up into everlasting life, that which never runs dry for him who has

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it ; and the third thing is, that its overflow becomes rivers of living water for others. So that, instead of having recourse to earthly streams coursing through this scene, the streams go forth from us in testimony to the world wherever it will accept the blessing.

In Israel the steps in declension are definitely marked. Unfaithfulness, independency, worldliness, and there is even a deeper degradation—idolatry. (Vers. 27, 28.) Only when this stage was reached, probably, would she admit the first—"thou hast forsaken me." But He who sees the end from its beginning brands the incipient condition with its final character. The analogy holds good with us. Who would admit his fidelity to Christ was gone? Yet that is the true character of the earliest buddings of decline. Christ has ceased to be "everything," and now stands at the door and knocks. The next step is independency. We have resources within ourselves, or those who are our company. We hold acquired truth, and are enriched with gifts, and

have need of nothing! Is it not forgotten that human cisterns will hold no water, and that it is only in the mystery, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Independency is dishonour to the One body, as neutrality is dishonour to the Head, the denial of what is due to Him; two things, but very closely allied. The third is worldliness. Noph and Tahapenes (the world in principle) have taken away our crown. (Compare Jer. ii. 16, margin, with Rev. iii. 11.) We are in the way of Egypt and the way of Assyria, the world at large; the waters of Sihor (black, turbid) revolt us not. And these broad streams with their fair galleys, carry the soul rapidly down to idolatry, the terminus of all declension, that is, the substitution of a spurious object, whether persons or principles, which is really a rival to Christ. Thus, in John, He is the true God and eternal life, and the antithesis is idols! "My children," says the aged apostle, "keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

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The Lord grant that our souls may have such an ever-deepening sense of His excellency, and the fragrance of His lips, that we may be preserved from every tendency to that declension which so woundeth His Spirit in the house of His friends.

W. R.
D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL
BE MADE PLAIN.

THE people of God in every age have been tried and worried by the enemy. All that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. The more faithfully any one maintains the testimony of God for the time, the more he will be opposed, but inasmuch as it is God's, it can only be defended by His power. No one could deny but that the blessed God would defend His own, yet oftentimes His people are as powerless in their attempts to do so as if God had for-

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saken them. As Gideon said in his day, "Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us why then is all this befallen us?" &c. (Judges vi. 13.) There is a readiness in the truly zealous to assert that God hath withdrawn His support when the enemy has done wickedly in the sanctuary, and is succeeding on every side; and as this is accepted, there is necessarily a hanging down of the hands and the cry, "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs upon their enemies;" and finally, "what wilt thou do unto thy great Name?" There is an implied doubt as to God's power to preserve the testimony, and indirectly the impression is that the power is no longer available, and there is therefore often a contentedness to go on in this state of reproach, like Israel in the days of Haggai, when they said, "The time has not come to build the house of the Lord." They were contented to let the house of the Lord lie waste. Joshua and Gideon ascribe the cause of their weakness to the absence of God's help; as if He had ceased to be on the behalf of His people.

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who sees his way walks out boldly and firmly on it. And the path of the just, or righteous, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. God stands by him also. "I have never seen the righteous forsaken." "The Lord stood by me," said the Apostle at the close when all forsook him; "the righteous are as bold as a lion." The prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and Satan is frustrated before the breast-plate of righteousness. "So that a man shall say verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth."

 FRAGMENT.

John vii. 1-9.

THE Lord Jesus never laid Himself out to gain the attention of men. He went up in the midst of the feast and secretly entering the temple to teach and undisturbed by the clamour around. As the living Father had sent Him, so He lived by—*on account of, the Father* ("by

reason of His being and living." See New Translation.) Light surrounded His going. Truth and certainty were with Him, and with Him alone, Himself the living Fountain for the thirsty to drink at. Was not that the *great* day of the feast when Jesus said, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink"? and when the Rock had been smitten, even from out of the belly of the believer should flow rivers of living water. And it was Jesus of Nazareth who uttered these wondrous words. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth depended upon His glorification in heaven. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before." (John vi. 62.) How great was this Man! And in verse 16 He says "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Oh, what a Teacher was this! Did He seek the glory of knowing letters, or what was the will that wrought in this service? Was it not to make His Father's glory known? When we hear Him we put our seal that He is true and no unrighteousness in Him. He lets us

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know in another passage that it was the Lord God who had given Him the tongue of the learned. It was He that wakened His ear morning by morning to hear, not as the learned but as the learner—the disciple. There never was such a teacher as Jesus, because there never was such a learner before, and never was teacher glorified in the taught as in the scene before us. But mark *how* He teaches! “*If any man will do his will.*” What a blow to the pride of man! How utterly it sets aside all man’s thoughts on such subjects! Was anything like this ever heard from the lips of the children of men? A teacher proclaiming that His doctrine was not His own, binding the glory of Him that sent Him with self-renunciation the most absolute and the most complete. Not in this way is doctrine acquired in schools of men; not after this pattern is it communicated to others. In the school of God, things of God are made known, learned, and communicated by the Spirit of God.

R. E.

TYPES OF THE CHURCH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THERE are several types of the church as to its *relationship* to Christ, such as Rebekah to Isaac; and also Moses and Joseph, in marrying Gentiles. But in Adam and Eve only, do we find a type of the mystery of the *nature* of the union between Christ and the church as set forth in Colossians ii.: “Ye are complete in him.” Christ is the head and source of everything.

“UNGIRDDED.”

Not *here* may pilgrim's robes unloose,
Thoughts, minds, affections guarded;
The traitor heart within him bound,
His loins must e'er be girded.
He scarce dare pause to gaze around,
Where all with sin is mixèd;
He only foils the tempter's wiles,
With eyes on Jesus fixèd.

But one day shall his footsteps tread,
God's “rest” that still “remaineth;”
No need for wilderness control,
Once that bright goal he gaineth.

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No *will* to cause a struggle there,
 No tinsel world to blind him ;
 No lust within to be repressed,
 Earth's shadows lie behind him.

He findeth all "made new" up there,
 Within, around him, golden ;
 Divine perfections. Nevermore
 Need impulse be withholden.
 Each thought, each wish befits the scene,
 Nor need there be restraining ;
 God's "new creation" perfected,
 No sin, no foe remaining.

In atmosphere of holiness,
 Soul, spirit, body, glorious ;
 And more than all the light thereof,
 His trusted Christ victorious.
 He drops the girdle—needless *there*,
 Where pure love flowing meeteth
 Responsive love, where every heart
 With one pulsation beateth.

Oh ! rest of sunshine, cloudless joy,
 They cannot cease their singing ;
 "He, He is worthy," filleth all,
 Eternal anthem ringing.
 For God's Beloved is fully known,
 They gaze on Him for ever ;
 Whose love was proved and tested here,
 And need the girdle never.

O. R., 1870.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter v. 1-20.

THERE still remained amongst the Jews some fragments of their ancient state of blessing : “ I am Jehovah that healeth thee ;” and this by the administration of angels, a general principle of the ways of God towards this people. It was not much, but a sign that God had not entirely abandoned His people ; people were still healed in the cistern of Bethesda ; he who was first to throw himself into it, when the angel troubled the water, was healed. The man who thus went into the water shewed faith in the intervention of God, and the desire to profit by it ; but the story told to us in the fifth chapter, leads us to a far greater power, and to far more important principles.

A poor palsied man was there, in the midst of all these invalids who were lying in the porches of the pool ; Jesus comes there. What is presented to us in Him has a double character ; He is

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position which the apostle John recognises as His (for in ver. 18 it is John who speaks); but He puts everything in its place. All that the Father does, He does; but it is not as another authority, secondary and independent, that He acts. He does that which the Father does and He does nothing else: He acts in agreement with the Father and moved by the same thought as the Father, and He does *all* things that the Father does. But having taken the form of a servant, He does not go out of this place, and whilst declaring Himself one with the Father, (for before Abraham was He was the *ὁ ὢν*, the "I am") He receives all, in these operations of grace and in their fruits in the glory, from the Father's hand. This is striking in this gospel, where the divine side of His Person is more fully brought out than in the others, although it be not more definitely affirmed. We find constantly that it is just when He speaks of being on the same footing as His Father, He places Himself nevertheless, ever upon the ground of receiving all from Him (the Father).

THOU THEREFORE ENDURE HARDNESS.

THERE can be no doubt that there is a special work of God in our day, although its extent be smaller, and, in a certain sense, its character be different to that carried out by the instrumentality of the apostle Paul and those who laboured with him. It was one thing to plant the foundations of the great structure of Christianity in this world, and it is another to be called to work when that very edifice is in ruins. Still the Holy Spirit is acting, and working in a special direction, and is preparing the saints of God for the coming of His Son, communicating to them the highest and most blessed truths long laid by in the dust, and morally separating them by this means from the world, especially from the christianised world, before the last awful judgments fall upon it. The question before us concerns the power bestowed to continue in a certain course, when these truths have by God's grace been received.

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Though all have their place, it is undeniable that God employs certain instruments to carry out His work, as He has been pleased at all times to do; and though there be great feebleness and a low state of things, if we take into consideration the truths we possess, yet nothing is gained by attempting to ignore this, or by looking on the work as less real and important because pursued in a day of weakness and ruin. We need to be kept from all false shame in this.

The question is whether the words "endure hardness," or, suffer evils, may be rightly applied to us as an exhortation in the present day. The subject is not new, but it is of such importance and so little understood that it may be well to inquire into it again. Although we have failed, and still fail in many ways, yet it seems to me that the Lord Jesus Christ is producing this wonderful virtue in those who are to be witnesses for Him unto the end, and forming souls to *endure*. Whatever be the kind of suffering one is called upon to go

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through, to be able to continue in a certain course, because assured that it is the right one, when many and various forces are acting against it, is a proof of no small power. Even in this world a man like Q. Fabius Cunctator, who could quietly pursue his lofty and well conceived plan amidst everything to try his patience both from friends and enemies, is justly looked upon as no ordinary being :—but christian endurance is of a far higher order and stamp, and it is this we are exhorted to shew. What is then the meaning of enduring evil ?

There are no doubt many in our time who are leading too easy a life, and avoiding all real trouble and pain, although theoretically they know they are called to share the lot of a suffering Christ; there are amateurs of various kinds, and many who have a certain perception of truth and even gift, but have no serious thought of taking their place in the despised ranks of those who would be true to the Lord. Cases could be pointed out of ease and luxury whilst professing to be witnesses, or of

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those who indolently approve, and talk of patronising the faithful :—of these it is useless to speak ; there is no thought of suffering, and the exhortation cannot apply to them.

But in turning to those who would really take their place with the Lord in His rejection, a distinction should be drawn between those who seek to distinguish themselves by extraordinary deeds and feats, and those who endure. The word is to *bear*, not to *court* hardship, and some can talk of severe work voluntarily undertaken with self-denial, which after all is not enduring. Many a man who would attempt some daring feat, and expose himself to great fatigue or inconvenience, when perhaps it was not called for, has been known to murmur or even stop on his course when meeting some little suffering or obstacle. It is a known maxim in the world that in general those who can plan and contrive some great undertaking, rarely possess the patience to go through the successive steps by which the end must be obtained ; and it is also true in

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the work of the Lord, that one who would wish to distinguish himself thus, may have bitter lessons to learn in the present state of things. It was no doubt difficult and trying to patiently tire out a wary enemy, but how infinitely superior Fabius appeared in the long run to his dashing colleague, who would have compromised everything by his brilliant acts !

It is not now the time for a series of Maccabæan exploits, but of going on steadily in a heavy road, where we shall be tried and tested to the last : for if we have the highest joys, we have the most painful and humiliating trials at the same time. It has been observed of the faithful who went through fire and steel in another testimony in and after the middle ages, that it was generally the weakest who shone the most when the time came to endure a course of torture ; and that many who were bold confessors, and stoutly derided the stake, yet often failed to bear pain so well and patiently as those who had shewn more mistrust of themselves.

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Our testimony is of a different kind; we are not called upon to undergo the rack or wheel, but we *are* called upon to hold the truth firmly to the last, amidst much trial and disappointment. The question now comes most seriously before us whether we are prepared to *endure*, or whether we shall abandon our post, feeling the way too irksome and disappointing, and the corrupting power of the enemy too strong. It has been remarked of Paul that an ordinary man would not have continued his service with vigour and elasticity, although he might have remained true in the long series of sufferings, physical and moral, which Paul was called to pass through. To *endure* is not merely to support the pain, but to continue one's course and service with unshaken trust in the Lord, shewing His power and energy to the end. A natural man's spirit, however brave, could not fail to be cowed after a long series of stripes, imprisonment, and disappointments more cutting than the lash, although the man himself might remain true: but here we see

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the same cheerful industry in service to the end, the same thoughtful care and grace, as the second Epistle to Timothy fully presents to us; and this is the extraordinary power of the Christian, which the Holy Spirit would produce in us, in our measure.

Here then comes the word to us, who are not called upon to go through violent persecutions or suffering, but to hold on in a path of faithfulness, though everything around may discourage us. Could we but learn, as the way becomes more weary, to *endure* more patiently both the sneers of the religious world and the disappointments which we often meet, the testimony could not fail to be brighter. This very fact supposes constant communion with the Lord Jesus where He is, and nothing, no one else, can give us the real power to persevere. Sustained by Him who loves and cares for His saints infinitely more than His poor servants can, blessed though it be to serve Him and them, we can look forward to the moment when every one of them shall be presented with joy

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unspeakable before the Father. The struggle cannot fail to end well: the victory and final triumph are both secured, and the crowning glory is at hand: till then, the word that should ring in our ears is, *endure*—as the last order we shall receive in the field. May that glorious prospect, and the present mercy, power, and love of Him who has called us, and given us the privilege of serving Him, keep our hearts, so that we be neither ashamed of Him nor of His service! May such soul-inspiring thoughts awaken us to estimate His work more highly, and to seek fresh power from Him to endure to the very end!

E. L. B.

NEUTRALITY.

Nothing has so seriously damaged the work and truth of God, as the introduction of principles and modes of action which obtain in the age. As long as the unique position of the church of God, the heavenly witness of Christ on earth, without any visible support, but

maintained in divine energy and order by a power from heaven, without any prospect here save storm and trial, yet invigorated and held on its way by a heavenly hope peculiar to itself, asserted its own divine influence within the affections of the saints of God gathered to the name of Christ, there was a great breakwater to the rising tide—but now that there has been practically a gradual and almost inperceptible slipping away from this peculiar and exclusive position, it is not difficult to see how the world or the age, as it is more closely approached, and approximated to, affects by its mode of judging and principle of action, all the great questions which are raised. It is true there are those who have *outwardly* assumed a position into which their souls have never travelled; to such, common sense and worldly expedients have ever been guiding principles—to such, the object, resources, nay, even the language of faith, have been all strange and unnatural; without knowing it perhaps, their garments have been ~~woollen~~ and linen, and their

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fields have been ploughed with ox and ass, and planted with diverse seeds. This has long been seen, but with increasing corruption and declension, this class has multiplied and that by an instrumentality within, which derives all its manner of operation from without, so that the circle where divine ways should rule, is in great danger of becoming the sphere where human thoughts prevail. Now it is fully admitted that common sense is an invaluable ingredient in man in the sphere of men, but it is equally clear that it is a false guide in the things of God; of this nature is the subject which gives title to this paper. Neutrality is a wise and safe principle in the world; perhaps though even *there* a few might be found who do not regard it in any other light than that of contemptible selfishness; but inasmuch as the great feature of the age is 'every one for himself,' it may be assumed that a convenient door of escape out of difficulty, and a valuable method of self-preservation is generally found in being neutral—but be it well understood that neutrality to

all but himself and his interests is the principle of the neutral one, and it is a very solemn reality that when the professing church has reached the climax of this character, it is no longer fit for Christ, being *lukewarm* and neither cold nor hot, He will spue it out of His mouth. The last phase of the professing church, Laodicea, will exhibit the principle in its most perfect proportions, and as all its tendencies and maxims are rapidly forming and spreading on every side, so now is it evident that every question which either affects the blessed Lord in His *person*, *truth* or *interests*, brings manifestly to the front this Laodicean spirit of neutrality.

It is not questioned that there are many at this moment who do not see where or how the blessed Lord is touched either in His person or truth, and hence are strong advocates for assuming neutral ground in the difficulties of the hour, and their plea for assuming this position is, that they *do not see*, that they *cannot see*, and that it is very unloving and ungracious not to allow every scope

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for difference of judgment and the like; but all such pleading only serves to give solemn prominence to the state of soul *manifested* in such excuses as these. If Christ be assaulted either in His person, or in the truth which relates to His body the church, where can that soul be who is unable to see it? Does not such insensibility and obtusity, plainly declare a state of moral distance from the Lord, if not more, even a moral blindness very terrible to contemplate? Neutrality is then the *symptom* rather than the *disease*, and this is an important fact to be well weighed before the Lord; for it is that which produces the symptom which is in truth the serious matter for us all. Very solemn is the picture presented by Samson, grinding in the Philistine's prison house, both his eyes put out, or dying with them in the end of his life; but these consequences or effects are far more solemn, if we go to the root of the matter, and behold Samson telling the Nazarite secret to Delilah and then sleeping upon her knees!

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It is not a little remarkable that more than thirty years ago witnessed a solemn picture, viz., neutrality resorted to where the glory of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ was concerned; the fruit and consequences of that neutrality still remain, and now Satan is working to reproduce the like principle of neutrality when the truth relating to Christ's body on the earth has been violently assailed.

With regard to this false principle now so rife, it is striking to see that the neutral one in ecclesiastical things contends for independency, and in doctrine and practice is earthly and opposed to what is heavenly: it is not mere failure in practically exhibiting the power of heavenly things in the walk, alas, there is too much of that on every side; but I speak of a positive refusal of the truth, in some cases expressed in a bitterness of terms very sorrowful to contemplate. It is not possible on heavenly ground, to maintain neutrality—"art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" is the challenge as standing *there*; and if the true position on the other side Jordan, be abandoned

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and a country chosen, other than that Canaan of hope and promise, observe how it leads to a kind of independency as in the two and a half tribes of which (Ed) the "great altar to see to" (Joshua xxii.) is a witness. The last phase of the professing church has come; its principles are enfolding as in a vast death shroud, the world—church of to-day; the characteristic feature of Laodicea is neutrality, lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, an indifferentism most solemn to contemplate! May His saints be warned and thus preserved through His grace, that in this testing moment, when His mouth is separating the precious from the vile, many may be rescued and restored, to be revenged upon themselves for every thought of which He and He alone was not the centre and motive, and with renewed vigour to meet His thoughts and heart who has thus expressed them "for thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

W. T. T.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

“ALL WHO ARE IN ASIA HAVE
TURNED AWAY FROM ME.”

It is of the deepest interest to ascertain the cause of the defection of “all who are in Asia” (where he had laboured much) from Paul, for surely in turning away from him they had turned away from the truth specially communicated by him, and which was identified with him. To Paul was committed the mystery, and though it was revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, yet to the apostle Paul specially this great truth was committed as we see from Ephesians iii. 7, 8. “Of which I am become minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me, according to the working of His power. To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ.” Accordingly we find Peter in his second Epistle acknowledging the peculiar light

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as He leads, but when I seek to make myself an expression of sanctity, it is will-worship, from which the knowledge of the mystery can alone save me. While a soul is learning the ministry of the gospel, it is not exposed to the snare of religiousness, that is, supposing that the simple gospel of God has been presented to it. It is after it has found rest in Christ's finished work that it is exposed to the snare of religiousness, from which only the knowledge of the mystery can preserve it.

Surely we can see how great the inducement was to those in Asia to turn away from Paul. The very same prevails in this day. The man who seeks to acquire or enjoy on earth must find the mystery very unsuited to him, and when he refuses to surrender, (the gain now is in proportion to the surrender) he, according as he has conscience, relieves it by religiousness, the fervent activities of the natural feelings in one form or another, so that at times Christ Himself is addressed and approached in human affection, and not in the love of

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the Spirit, at once so deep, so absorbing, as to exceed and distance the warmest conceptions of the natural heart. If you will not surrender, and will be religious, you must turn away, like those in Asia, from Paul. Alas for those who do so, and still more for those who lead them into, as the ten spies thought, an easier path ! Alas, they had erred greatly, and swift destruction came upon them. "The men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord." (Num. xiv. 6.)

DEVOTEDNESS.

"ENTREAT me not to leave thy side,
 "Nor back across the waste to tread ;
 "Whatever land thy grief may hide,
 "Where'er thou lay'st thy weary head ;
 "My willing steps shall follow thine,
 "Thy God and people shall be mine."

The Angel wept in Israel's land,
 And Bochim spake of sorrow sore ;

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Nor cheerful could the Remnant stand,
But Marah was the name she bore ;
And Judah's maidens chanted low,
A tale of sad decline and woe.

Then with true purpose chose a heart
With Marah's slighted Lord to be ;
And a poor stranger took the part,
To cling to suff'ring poverty :
" God do to me, and more beside
" If aught but death our souls divide."

And in our day, when Orpahs leave,
And back to Moab's mountains turn;
When foes insult, companions grieve,
And few the way of truth discern ;
Grant us amidst the din and glare
Thy mind to know, Thy thoughts to share.

Saviour and Lord, Thou wilt sustain
The feeble widow with Thy Might.
Who follows Thee, midst joy or pain,
And findeth not Thy burden light ?
Peace and repose possess the soul,
That walks beneath Thy blest control.

Those whom the Father gave to Thee
O glorious hope ! O quickening thought !
Shall to the Father's presence be
By Thee, Lord Jesus, safely brought !
Till then, though tempted, scorned, or tried,
May naught from Thee our souls divide.

E. L. B.

J O H N ' S G O S P E L.

Chapter v. 21-29.

JESUS then goes on here to the work which in fact was being accomplished, and is being still accomplished, whether by the Father, or by the Son only, and He does all things whatsoever the Father does. There is a work which He does as Son of Man, and which the Father does not. "Father" is the name of grace and relationship; "Son of man," that of conferred authority. If the Father and the Son work, it is a work of grace that is in question. But the Father has not been humbled: He remains in the unchangeable glory of the Godhead. All judgment is given to the Son, so that those who shall have despised Him will be obliged to recognise Him by this means.

But let us take the instructions of the passage in their order. The Son does more than heal; "for as the Father awakeneth the dead and quickeneth

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the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth. . . . It is no longer here ; “those who shall hear shall live,” but *all* shall hear and come forth ; those who shall have done well to the resurrection of life, and those who shall have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Notice carefully, that although the judgment assigns to each one a place according to his works, it is not the judgment that separates the risen ; the resurrection itself makes the separation. Those who have done well do not form part of the same resurrection with those who have done evil. The Lord does not here speak of the interval of time which separates the resurrection of the one class from that of the other ; that must be looked for in the revelation that God gives of dispensations. Here is a question of things in their essence : there is a resurrection which is that of the just, called thus ; and another resurrection, distinct from the first, a resurrection of judgment in which the living, glorified in the first, have no part. Sometimes, indeed, a difficulty has been

raised as to the word "hour," which is employed here, but it is a sorry argument, for the same expression is found in verse 25, which presents to us as an "hour," a space of time which has lasted nearly two thousand years, and which comprises two distinct states of things, one in which Christ upon earth is acting personally, and the other in which Christ glorified acts by the Spirit. These two epochs nevertheless make up but one "hour," as the passage views the question; and it is the same thing here. The first *hour* is that during which Christ quickens souls; the other hour, the period of verse 28, is that during which Christ raises bodies. The thing is quite simple; one of these hours, as I have said, has already lasted more than eighteen centuries.

THE HISTORY OF GRACE HERE.

PSALM XXXII.

THE Psalms may in a certain sense be said to be the "Romans" of the Old

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Testament; more distinctly and more systematically than any other a book of divinity for Old Testament saints. Scripture speaks of but two men, it has been remarked, and in the very first psalm they are seen—"the first man" and "the second Man;" not in their chronological or historic order, but in that order which, being divine and eternal, puts the second Man before the first.

The Psalms open, then, with God's blessed Man upon the earth in contrast with the ungodly, every other man in fact, who are like chaff which the wind carrieth away. When we go through the description of this blessed Man we see how emphatically it exhibits the One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, *separate from sinners.*" We trace no likeness of ourselves nor of our fellow-men, and have sorrowfully to exclaim, if that Man only be blessed, "Who is sufficient for these things? Who shall stand before God?"

But when we come to Psalm xxxii., quite another note is struck, the key-

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note of divine grace is heard resounding,
and we may joyfully add

“Soft the voice of mercy sounded,
Sweet as music to the ear.”

The first two verses give the thesis of the psalm, the title of which is “Maschil,” a psalm giving instruction. Those verses are Jehovah’s utterance propounding the divine method of bringing into a state of blessedness a man who is a sinner, one who is practically the very opposite of the blessed man of the first psalm. Then from verses 3 to 7 we have the psalmist depicting in touching strains the exercises and experiences of the soul which is the subject of this grace, and from verse 8 onward Jehovah’s grace upon grace to such an one. After verses 1 and 2, in which the theme is stated, is *selah*, a pause. In verses 3 and 4 the exercised soul lies speechless; his cries are as the roaring of a bear. Day and night is he under the weight of God’s hand. “I became thoroughly miserable,” says he, “while a thorn was fastened in me”

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(Hebrew). Again a pause, *selah*. Then comes the giving up of self, and deliverance through confession. He acknowledges his sin, uncovers his iniquity, confesses his transgressions unto Jehovah, and his faith gets the divine answer; he can say in the same breath, "thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Another pause, *selah*. The next two verses (6, 7) bring out the result of the soul being brought to God who is now known under the full sense of forgiveness, viz., that dependence and confidence towards Him are engendered in the heart. Every one that is godly prays in the time of his finding (see margin); it is new-born dependence, now for the first time really wrought in the soul. "Behold he prayeth." What dependence can any man have in an "unknown God"? But when God is known, in the day of his finding, prayer is the spirit of dependence spontaneously expressed. But there is more than this, for the prayer of one who knows God is not that of despondency but of hope, of confidence; "surely in

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the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." He says, "*Thou* art my hiding-place; *thou* shalt preserve me from trouble; *thou* shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." God is seen to be everything to us, and we in Him, whether for shelter or for song. It is no narrow escape, but a real and a royal conquest. *He* has wrought for us and the foe is so signally routed that He who triumphed brings us to share with Himself the portion and the spoil, animating our hearts with divine joy and surrounding us with pæans of victory! There is again a break, *selah*.

Now Jehovah responds, and nothing in its season was ever more beautiful. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye." The psalmist is as a child weaned from his mother putting his hand in that of his father. And as a father Jehovah takes the hand of His child. The threefold "*thou*" of verse 7 on the lips of the psalmist now finds its answer in the threefold "*thee*"

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of verse 8. Nothing could be more lovely than the exquisite grace of Jehovah's response. As the sequel of His servant's avowal that Jehovah has become his object, He deigns to avow that the psalmist is an object to Him ! Nor is it any trifling thing that is promised, for it is nothing less than Jehovah's undertaking to educate him for Himself. Who that knows anything of the weary work of educating a child to maturity but will acknowledge the magnitude of the task, but how much more arduous the *education of a saint* ! Was ever indolence, waywardness, restlessness, dulness, frivolity, perversity, et cetera, found in a child that is not more than matched by every form in the school of God ? Alas, alas ! But how assuring His own word : I will instruct thee ; I will teach thee ; I will guide thee. No relegation of the wearisome task to angel or archangel, but Himself will do it. And the way in which His guidance is given is full of interest, instruction too. "I will guide thee with mine eye" involves, most evidently, that we have

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eyes wherewith to see, and that they be lifted up unto Him. "Thou shalt guide me with *thy counsel*" (Ps. lxxiii. 24), involves our diligent attention and subjection to His word or we do not get the counsel it gives; but "with mine eye" is a more subtle thing, and calls for even greater diligence! How shall I catch the rapid and delicate glance of His eye unless mine eyes wait upon Him? Impossible. The eye that is single is supremely directed to Him, and the whole body is then illumined with the light of His countenance. Is it not deplorable to reflect on the meddle and muddle existing among saints, and the sorry blunders that are committed both in their own families and businesses and in the church of God? And is it because God has withdrawn His eyes? Never. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." It is the reverse; the eyes of the saints have been diverted from Him, and they grope in an obscurity of their own creating.

How forcibly in the next verse Jeho-

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vah warns His saints, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." The horse in its high-spirited and dangerous impetuosity, and the mule in its stubborn sluggishness, supply a pertinent illustration of those opposite and pernicious extremes against which we do well to guard, being those tendencies of our nature which are brought into activity when in our insubjection we lose the guidance of His eye. It is Jehovah's lesson in *obedience*, the lesson of a broken will. The object of both bit and bridle is to bring into subjection the powers and qualities of the animal so as to produce useful service. How much more elevated and more acceptable is that obedience which is the spontaneous and loving answer of a devoted heart to the guidance of God's eye!

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;" shall the saint then be exempt? Nay, this is not said. But what is said abides unchangeably true, "he that

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trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." The psalmist had be-spoken "songs of deliverance" to encompass him, but Jehovah knows what a "time of need" is the sojourn of the saint here, and He gives us His own promise that, trusting in Him, we shall have *mercy*, much-needed mercy, to compass us about.

And lastly He strikes the highest note of all ; He *seeks* the worship of His saints, and accordingly He invites us to high and holy and happy festival. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous : and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart." In our own case it would be joying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. v. 11.) We have thus forgiveness, dependence, confidence, obedience, and praise as the consecutive lessons in this psalm of instruction. He who passes with honours through Jehovah's curriculum is Jehovah's doubly blessed man !

May He lead us to profit by His *maschil*, making us more apt scholars under His tutoring hand, with eyes

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more diligently fixed on Him, and hearts more fitted and more free to enter into the divine joy of His worship and praise.

W. R.

D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

HOW TO HELP THE CHURCH.

No one can be truly right in service who does not understand the interests of his Lord. If a servant does as the Lord has directed him, he is working according to His mind, even though the servant may not know it himself. It is however a great loss to the servant not to know his master's interests, because if he does not, he is ever liable to being drawn away from the direct call to service which he had received, and he becomes influenced by the need of man, by his own feelings in various ways.

The great truth after being sealed by the Spirit of God is the construction of

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the church. By one spirit we are all "baptized into one body." The one who enjoys the Spirit of adoption has, even though ignorant, an undefined sense of belonging to a company; that he is not an isolated unit. In Israel there was a national tie, and this gave each a common right or interest which was damaged or advanced by the conduct of any, but there was no spiritual tie which, like the nervous system in the human body, is instantly affected over the whole frame, however distant one part may be from the part where the sensation originated. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. There is individual blessing first, conversion and sealing, but there is no true or intelligent service until one understands his relationship to Christ and His people. If a believer be only one of a company to whom special rights and privileges are committed, he loses if he in any way forfeits them, and he can mar the honour of any band of them if he be

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among them in any form, they never can see it as Christ sees it. They can see nothing but as it affects their own special work, and without intention they are as ignorant of what the church really is, and are as dissociated in heart from it, as the two and a half tribes were from the land, though professedly supporting those really determined to settle there. Their professions and their advocacy, while their heart is elsewhere, cause a moral breach which cannot be repaired, and the church is not helped but hindered. If Christ's one circle of interest on earth is not mine, I cannot help it, and if not helping, I am not helped. The Lord give us to lay these things to heart.

TI

Two several lovers built two several cities: the love of God buildeth a Jerusalem; the love of the world buildeth a Babylon; let every man inquire of himself what he loveth and he shall resolve himself of whence he is a citizen.—*St. Augustine.*

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND.

FIERCE beat the desert sun,
Scorching and strong,
Arid the burning sands
Weary and long,
Egypt's food far behind,
Enemies here,
Canaan seemed distant, and
Perishing near.

Whose is the Mighty Hand
Offering shade ?
Bidding the waters gush,
Raining the bread,
Mighty Jehovah God,
Israel's guide,
Shelter, food, victory,
Found by Thy side.

Mighty His shadow, the
Enemies fell.
Daily the need was met,
"Manna" and "Well,"
Strength for the helplessness,
Patience for wrong,
Merciful, mighty God
Suffering long.

Burneth earth's desert still,
Hot the noontide,
Falls there no shadow where
I may abide,

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While yet the pilgrim's feet
Daily must start,
Wells there no waterspring,
Rest for the heart ?

Where is this pierced hand,
Guiding the way ;
Shepherd's voice clear and sweet,
What doth it say ?
" Father"—A Father's name
Jesus hath taught,
Home to a Father's heart
There I am brought.

Told out by Sychar's well,
Seen on the wave ;
Learnt by the gate of Nain
Bethany's grave ;
Wondrous Gethsemane
Calvary's night
His heart, His Father's heart
Love in its might.

Never had Israel
Lessons like mine ;
Writ on that lowly life
Human—Divine.
Never knew Israel
Shelter of love,
Straight from a Father's Heart
Unveiled above.

O. R.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapters v. 20.—vi. 1-21.

HAVING declared these great truths as to life and judgment, which reach to the end of God's ways with men, Christ goes back to the great principle which was at the very beginning of His discourse; that is, that He could do nothing independently of the Father. If it had been otherwise, it would have been, indeed, a denial of that bond between Him and the Father in which they were one, and which was to be seen in everything, with this additional fact that He had the form of a servant, of one sent by the Father. He did nothing of His own will: according as He heard, so He judged, and His judgment was just, for He sought not His own will in anything, but that of the Father who had sent Him. (Verse 30.) No selfish motive whatever was to be found in His way of thinking, but the judgment which He formed, whatever it might be, flowed from the communica-

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whole story, a story in which He puts spiritual and heavenly blessings in the place of Messianic ones: these heavenly blessings are to be fulfilled in the resurrection, upon which He insists four times in the course of the chapter. He is recognised as the prophet who was to come; they wish to make Him king; but He avoids that by going up to pray alone, and the disciples cross the lake without Him. They are looked upon here in the character of the Jewish remnant; still it is this that has become the christian assembly. These verses give us, as I have said, the frame-work of Christ's history, recognised as a prophet, and refusing royalty in order to carry on the priesthood on high whilst His people cross the waves of a troubled world with difficulty. As soon as Jesus comes up with them, they arrive at the place where they were going; difficulties are over, they have reached their goal: here the disciples represent entirely the Jewish remnant.

(To be continued.)

THE FEAST AND THE FAST.

THE contrast between the two great subjects of Luke xiv., is both instructive and solemn. The great supper which grace provides, and to which the most outcast ones are welcome is followed by a proclamation very momentous, as to what is involved in following Christ in this day of His rejection. For the first, there is no claim, exaction, or demand whatever: for the other, all must be abandoned and forsaken absolutely. Let us inquire as to the differences so markedly presented here. The supper is grace, the provision of the blessed God according to the largeness and ability of His heart: not only so, but in its costly and precious providing, it is the expression of His nature, so that therein is unfolded, His own satisfaction and delight as well as the surpassing blessedness of that scene where every heart is satisfied with that which it is the joy of God's heart to provide. It would be impossible to conceive any-

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thing more wonderful than this, it overreaches all our narrow and contracted thoughts of His grace, and it rebukes our natural conception and ideas of God Himself. The one whose ejaculation of "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—gave occasion to the blessed Lord to expound the supper, must have marvelled at the magnificence of the scene described, compared with his own thoughts, but what is it to the soul now taught and led by the Holy Ghost to enter into it by faith? It never can be too earnestly insisted upon, that it is not a *part* of grace, but the *whole* which is unfolded in the supper; it is not the mere relief of a sin-stricken conscience or a jaded heart, but the rich resources of a sphere where want is unknown. Oh the blessedness and satisfaction of lying down here and surveying the vastness of the love, which not only entitles us to all it provides, but makes us welcome even to share the deep and blessed joys of God Himself, where He has His own festivities.

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It is sorrowful to see how this magnificence of grace is received by man: he has no *taste* for God's supper, the old wine of nature is preferred to the new wine of grace, and as the one is cultivated, the other is refused. It is true the refusal is not couched in offensive terms, it is polite and refined enough, but it is notwithstanding a genuine and distinct refusal, and "I pray thee have me excused," is a solemn commentary upon the word of God: "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better."

It is well to observe also, that not one of the good things of nature here named as reasons why the invited guests might fairly decline the invitation of grace, are bad things in themselves; they are not what are sometimes called unlawful things, on the contrary they are what may be termed good things, and herein lies the snare. Things bad and unlawful would be readily owned as such, and never for a moment placed in competition with grace, and its rich

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feast, but the sweets of nature, and its providing here named, are all the things which are lawfully open to man, but as the heart finds its *treasure and object* in them, Christ is superseded and set aside, there is no taste for the supper. May this have its weight with all our souls at this moment; the joys of nature have the tendency to *distract* the heart, and this distraction is the bane of real spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. To him whose heart is in the world, or whose exercises of soul to walk with God is not only on the surface, but scant and shallow, it may seem otherwise; but not to him, whose eye is single, and whose heart above all desires to be in the secret of the Lord at this time. May the Lord teach His beloved people the surpassing delight and joy of this rich feast of His.

The next subject is discipleship; and here the contrast with the supper is immense; for clearly to follow *Christ rejected*, involves the breaking with everything; it is impossible to have two hearts, a heart for Christ and for the world. The

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deplorable picture which is being presented at this moment is the effort of many to hold the world and Christ; may the Lord in His great grace open eyes to see the impossibility of it! Alas, discipleship as here unfolded is old fashioned and out of date, and those who seek to follow in this path are reviled and aspersed by the half-hearted and the worldling. The consecrating principle of grace spoken of here, *salt*, that holy separation unto God, alas at what a discount it is, among the professed servants of Christ, and even among those who *outwardly remain* where it is evident their hearts and affections are not! What a description the Lord here gives of an unspiritual saint—salt that has lost his savour, and which is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. May the Lord awaken up conscience among His people, that they may see the faith and claims of a rejected Lord and Christ amid the confusion and darkness of the present moment.

W. T. T.

THE SERVANT.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Acts xx. 35.

WE may well take a peculiar interest in the last words of Paul's speech in this chapter, which sum up a life of true devotedness to Christ, and they are of more importance than might appear at first sight.

Much has been said lately on the question of devotedness, and the point has been clearly and well determined; namely, that true devotedness must proceed from a knowledge of the Lord's own thoughts at the present moment, and from communion with Him in them. A further remark might be made from the passage in question, for it is evident that it embodies the whole of our Saviour's life, although we do not find the *words* in the Gospels. Paul is allowed to take his Master's own device or motto, and to write it round his own colours after a life of laborious activity in His service. A more precious iden-

tification of the master with the servant would be difficult to find.

The preceding part of the charge in this chapter has doubtless often been commented upon; the grand point we should notice is that the Apostle's mind is full of the interests of Christ and of God; that is, of the church of God, which He has bought with the blood of His own Son; and this in itself is sufficient evidence of His being in communion with the Lord, for He cherishes nothing else upon this earth, but His loved assembly.

Whilst admitting Paul's special call as to this, the charge given to the elders at Ephesus would justify this question to us all: Can there be true devotedness, unless the soul have entered in some measure into the whole counsel of God, and the things which concern His church, which He has purchased at an infinite price? (Ver. 27, 28.) I believe the answer will be: *No*, and that unless these things be in mind, (as they were evidently in the apostle's mind in the passage) there will be sooner or later

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some failure in our devotedness. This may appear harsh ; but we shall do well to examine it, and all the more so because we live in a day when a feverish activity animates the whole religious world. It will be found that the numbers in Christendom and amongst them true Christians, who have stopped short of the mystery of the church ;—of Christ's love in giving all He had for her ;—of Paul's who cheerfully gave up his status in this world, and then filled up in his body the afflictions of Christ for her (Col. i.) ; it will be found that they will stop short also in their service, and that at the end their lives cannot be summed up by "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It is not that there may not be much work, and that the Lord blesses it ; the point to be kept to is that in our day when the truths of the assembly glorify the Centre of all testimony, those who know them not, or care not to seek them, must fail in their personal devotedness. The Lord Himself is working for and in His assembly, and it is necessary to know

Him and what is due to Him and to her to whom He bears this special affection, in order to spend our lives in *giving*; in patiently working for the good of those to whom we may lend but an ill-requited service. How many cases, alas ! might be quoted of those who have stopped short, and whose end has been rather that of disappointed egotism than sacrifice of self ! It is more blessed to give than to receive.

There is an old French proverb, in vogue before our disorderly days of independence : *Noblesse oblige* ; that is, nobility expects a certain line of conduct from the noble, and one who is in a high position is expected to shew in his manner and actions a generosity not to be found amongst the vulgar. This might perhaps illustrate our subject ; that is, the fact of knowing God's glorious counsels as to the church, and the Lord Jesus Christ's devotedness towards her (in that He sold *all* He had to buy the pearl), and to be associated with Him in such a work in our measure, will call forth the energies of a life

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truly devoted to Him. They will be called forth in such a manner, generous after a divine pattern, that the life itself shall be characterised by giving rather than receiving.

Devotedness has become a synonym for sentimentality amongst some people ; fears too are sometimes expressed that if the truths of the church of God be too much insisted upon, minds will become narrow, and saints become theorists. That there may be, nay there are such, is quite true : but this does not touch the question. If ever there was a time when the saints of God should be called upon to shew by their actions, their whole lives, the force and power of the truths they possess, that day is our own. The principle of the religious world around us is to *receive rather than to give*, and this will end in the fully-expanded, heartless Laodicea, where neither Christ nor devotedness are known. How many of us, alas ! have been infected with it, and how many led away ! How many have gained thus, though they have

lost immeasurably in God's thoughts ! It is in thinking of such a passage as the one before us, that we turn to Him who is the Head of the church to seek to be more fully in communion ; so that our lives be characterised by unflagging diligence in His service ; so that our actions, from the cup of cold water, to the loss, if necessary, of our reputation (see 2 Cor. xiii. 7) may mark us in self-sacrifice as knowing Him, and being taught of Him whose whole life was expressed thus : " It is more blessed to give than to receive."

May He accomplish this in each one of us in our measure. Amen.

E. L. B.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE LIGHT ACQUIRED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTERY.

WITH any great or central truth, such as the mystery, Christ and the Church, a light must be acquired which could not be in any other way. Every truth

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can only be done, and the more I see it, the less I shall like or tolerate isolation.

OUR FUTURE.

Lastly, now, as to our future. If I do not see the mystery, I cannot recognise the position the church will hold with regard to Christ hereafter. As the church is His body now, so will it ever retain, but in a perfect way, this relationship to Him. "The fulness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph. i. 23.) As we see and know, alas, how inadequately the church now performs its great mission, and sets forth Christ in the scene where He has been refused; but in the future to endless ages, when she comes down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, shall she set forth in perfection of beauty, and without diminution His glory; herself all glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, she ever united to Him, and holding thus a position pre-eminently greater than any of the other saints. While all are of one, so that He is not ashamed to call

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them brethren, the church only is united to Him, and ever connected with Him as His body for ever and ever.

THE LAMB IS THE LIGHT THEREOF.

How shall we ever enter in
Undazzled by the glorious sheen
Of yonder city bright ?
Deem not too brilliant to the view,
There glory has an aspect new,
The Lamb shall be its light.

When at the brazen altar spilt
His precious blood met all our guilt,
Our sins of deepest dye ;
The Lamb, who, bearing all our woe,
Made us more white than driven snow,
Still bears that name on high.

The Lamb, who all along the way
To feeble heart in vase of clay
Hath been a resting-place.
No anxious thoughts to be concealed,
All fully without fear revealed,
To God thus known in grace.

Thus, not o'erpowered by thoughts so high,
With joyful hope we lift the eye
To golden vistas bright ;
The Lamb ;—to us well known, shall be—
O thought of speechless ecstacy !
The central Fount of light. E. L. B.

FRAGMENT.

THEY asked Him (John viii. 25), "Who art thou?" He says, "I am altogether what I say." A perfect description of perfection in man. Through those communications which flowed forth pure as the waters of life which flow from the throne of God and the Lamb, it might have been perceived who He was, had there been eyes to see. There was not a momentary pause or break in a life that flowed forth in the absolute consistency of perfection, and the undoubted consciousness of it, equally before God or in the presence of man. As before God, "Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal;" with regard to man, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And yet they could say, "Who art thou?" "Well spake the Holy Ghost, The heart of this peolpe is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed," &c.

R. E.

“THY WAY MY PRESENCE
 WE SEPARATED.”

EXODUS XXXIII.

IN a day of confusion and sorrow, the mark of a true heart is the earnest desire to know *His way* through it all; and this is remarkably evidenced by the position of Moses at this time. Nothing could have been more solemn than the state of Israel; they had accepted the calf, saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” And their mournful condition is thus described: “And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” “The calf and the dancing” were the objects upon which the eyes of the man of God rested as he descended from the mount. What will Moses’ action be in the midst of such a scene? What are his first thoughts? Let us mark it well. Having broken the tables beneath the mount, and burnt the calf and ground it to powder, his *first and main* thought

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is the vindication of Jehovah's character and name, which had been basely and falsely associated with idolatry and sin. "Who is on the Lord's side" is neither Laodicean neutrality, nor selfish indifference. Very solemn was the test then ; and how blessed to find in Levi a people superior to the claims of nature where the honour of Jehovah was concerned, so that it was said of them in relation to this action in Exodus xxxii. 26-29, "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah, who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children : for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." (Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.) This then was Moses' first great act of vindication of Jehovah's claims. How blessed to think of it in this day of half-heartedness on the one side, and indifference on the other ; in this day of man (1 Cor. iv. 3), when the spirit of Laodicea prevails on

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the right hand, and the ways and mind of Gallio on the left. Very cheering and encouraging to faith are the ways of faith and devotedness, in this crisis-moment, when “he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey,” and when it may be said, as in the days of Jeremiah, “woe is me my mother, that thou has borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth.”

Now observe what follows this. Having, as we have seen, vindicated Jehovah's name in judgment, and in doing so brought out the faithfulness of Levi, who, by the act, earned, as it were, the priesthood, Moses shews how his heart apprehended the *holiness* of Jehovah; and the act of pitching the tabernacle without the camp, thus separating Jehovah's name from the guilt and defilement of Israel, is a blessed instance of its kind and day as to how faith's intimacy with the Lord alone can discern what is suitable to Him. Thus it is Moses makes a place for God outside the camp afar off from the camp, which had put a false god in His place and

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changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. May we not say that this is the kind of nearness to Christ and devotedness to His blessed interests and name which is lacking so much at this moment? And is not this the quality of faith which He is looking for especially now, and for which He Himself commended the church of Philadelphia in these words, "for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name"? May the Lord give His blessed people such-like loyalty of heart to His blessed Son in this day.

Another point in this history is full of deep instruction just now. Moses having made a place for God outside the camp, not only removed His name from association with idolatry and sin, and thus maintained His holiness and truth, but thereby was also set up that which some would call a *new test*; so that we read, "And it came to pass that every one *which sought the Lord*, went out into the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp"

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—mark the words well, “*which sought the Lord.*” Where *He was* then was everything. And is it not so now? “There am I” is the rallying-point of the hour. In the days of Moses some might have been contented with the camp, resting in that which once marked it, and no longer does so, but every one which sought the Lord went out without the camp.

These *principles* have a sorrowful but a very appropriate application to present days, for surely the Lord has been teaching us many things, and yet none more strikingly than this, that if we are to have Him, who is holy, Him who is true, in our midst, *it must be on His own terms.* Self-will and unholiness may judge otherwise, but faith will hold fast to His revelation of Himself as “*the Holy, the True*” (ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός), and look well, that such a name as His in its preciousness and value as His people’s alone resource, be not associated with what is foreign to His nature and glory. Now having judged the idolatry of the people, and pitched the tabernacle outside the camp, separating the name of God from it,

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Moses earnestly asks to know Jehovah's way (chap. xxxiii. 13), "Shew me now thy way"—how instructive and how blessed is this; there must be a moral condition of soul for such a desire. Any way out of a difficulty, be it ever so unworthy, will ever find the largest number of adherents; but the moral state indicated by Moses' previous acts in relation to Israel's sin and Jehovah's glory, will not, cannot, be satisfied with anything less than "*Thy Way*"—and how blessed is the reply, and how perfect is it, "*My presence shall go with thee.*" His presence marks His way, and His way is found where His presence is. And is it not so at this moment? If we be without the presence of Christ, we cannot be in His way; but there is more than this, for Moses says further on, "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? *So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.*" The way that it is known that

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He goes with us, is that we are separated to Him ; it works both ways, only those who are separated seek Him, then finding His presence and His way, and the proof that He is with them, is that they are separated. This exclusiveness, as it has been called, works *from within* to that which is *without* ; the outward part of it, may be seen without the inward power, it has ever been so, but it lasts only for a time and manifests *constant inconsistencies* ; but that which springs from within, the power of the cross of Christ (and what so exclusive and separating !) applied unsparingly by the Holy Ghost, will extend to every circle in a consistency and evenness peculiar to itself.

May the Lord teach us at this moment this perfect way of peace and rest ! May His beloved people be awakened from every slumber that would incapacitate them from judging what is suitable to Himself, so that with renewed desire to please Him, they may prove the reality and blessedness of His presence and His way amid the confusion and darkness of the hour. W. T. T.

“A MAN GREATLY BELOVED.”

DANIEL X.

There are certain crises in the history of God's testimony on the earth in which personal fidelity to Him as instinctively catching and meeting His mind, finds its favourable opportunity, yielding a character of service which to Himself is as sweet as it is rare, and to His saints as helpful as it is holy. Such was the case in Noah's building the altar, in Moses pitching the tabernacle outside the camp, in Phinehas' zeal for the Lord's sake, and in David's encounter with Goliath.

In each instance was there a new departure, and in not one of them was there, so far as we know, any definite word of the Lord for it. But faith was equal to the occasion and spiritual intelligence took the initiative, seizing for God its unwonted opportunity; thus He got His glory thereby and His faithful servant a peculiar blessing. Let it be noted, too, that each of these was in

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his way an honoured type of Christ; Noah, as head of a new creation; Moses, as mediator; Phinehas, as having everlasting priesthood; and David, as God's king, and the man after His own heart.

But there is yet another, “Daniel the prophet” signalized as “greatly beloved,” a distinction conferred upon him three times in the word, and upon him only. He may be taken as another type of the Lord Jesus, not only as having the key of divine mysteries, unfolding as a prophet God's counsels as to all things coming on the earth, but also as entering into all the experiences and sorrows of His faithful remnant which He would Himself enter into in another day. It is in this connection he earns the epithet of “greatly beloved.” Nor shall we feel surprise at this if we recognise the character of these exercises of soul, so voluntarily gone through with God. From his youth to his old age he had been not only an alien but a captive in a strange country, maintaining under circumstances the least favourable, an un-vowed Nazariteship. In the

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court of a barbaric monarch he was an object of constant jealousy and of implacable hate, and might have said with the apostle, "I die daily." But throughout his long career his sun never went down. Serving and surviving not only successive potentates but successive dynasties, he stood unflinchingly faithful to the God of Israel—a witness for Him and a pillar of testimony to His great name during the period in which Lo-ammi expressed the failure of his nation to the trust confided to them by Jehovah.

And when the Lord raised up Cyrus whose proclamation gave liberty to the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple, Daniel is found still in the land of his captivity in voluntary exile, humbling himself as at the first under the mighty hand of God. (Compare Ezra i. 1; Dan. x. 1.) And why is this but that as the man of God of his day he thought more of the moral state of the people and of what was due to Jehovah, than of their recently sorrowful circumstances now so happily changed? And has not this

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a voice for us? Had Daniel been more impressed with the latter than with the former, he would have beaten a rapid retreat from the land of his captivity. But "he that believeth shall not make haste," and while energy of faith characterised the remnant who went up—nor do I deny that Daniel himself probably went up later on—there was far from his spirit an exultation at the opening of the prison-doors. Great and natural were the joy of the people, and they took up "all the vessels of gold and silver, five thousand and four hundred," but there was just one thing they left with him—the *secret of the Lord!* He alone took adequate account of what was due to God; "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." Thus while the remnant were profiting by the signal mercy Jehovah had shewn them according to the word of His promise, Daniel was refreshing the heart of God in secret, rehearsing before Him in some degree the exercises through which Messiah would

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Himself go when He should identify Himself with the afflictions of His afflicted. In this solitude with the Lord he was in preparation, too, by self-imposed mourning and fasting for the great vision of the Lord of glory and for the revelation of God's ways in the earth until Emmanuel's land is filled with His praise and "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

But what is of moment to us is to see and to seize the principle involved. For which is the better thing, to be exulting in circumstances, be they the fruit of divine mercy, or to be alone with God in the deep current of His mind and the peace of His sanctuary? Alone with Him in self-chastening after His chastening hand is withdrawn; learning, as only then and thus we may, lessons from the Lord of glory as to the moral glory of the Lord?

His aged witness after seventy years of deprivation, might have legitimately longed to see the land of his fathers and the city of God, but who ever denied

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himself for the Lord's sake and was a loser? For two long years more he tarried, and not in vain, for *a greater sight!* Three full weeks he set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before God. And from the first day were his words heard, but the thing was so great, and so wondrous the revelation and so blessed, that wicked spirits in heavenly places withstood the angelic messenger bearing the secret of the Lord's counsels, thereby giving occasion to the prolonged exercise of Daniel's soul and the deep trial of his faith. In this, however, he failed not, and when the time was passed, “Then,” says he, “I lifted up mine eyes,” and upon what a magnificent, what a superb sight they opened! (Vers. 5, 6.) It was thus he won the title of “a man greatly beloved,” and what were his personal characteristics? Personal purity and divine wisdom; prayer and patience; self-abasement and true devotedness. And is there one of these things that might not, and ought not, to be equally seen in us? He stood in the courts of heathen

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kings, an ambassador for God, the dignity and composure of his bearing eclipsing by its moral lustre every other feature of the respective scenes in which he was an actor. Greatly feared he may have been, and bitterly hated he was, but when the time came, and the aged seer lifted up his eyes for the last vision vouchsafed to him, he was ravished with a sight of the Lord of glory, and he heard the voice of His words. Not another upon the earth shared that honour with him, nor received his distinguished epithet, and to him was confided that great prophecy which instructs the church of God now, and will subsequently instruct the remnant, as to the things which run on to the close. Nor is this all. "O man, greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." He is *strengthened*; he is *encouraged*; and he is *shewn that which is noted in the scripture of truth!* (Ver. 21.)

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Not for us circumstantially are such marvellous visions and revelations from the Lord, but do not these things speak to us in living power at a time like this? Rejoice as we fittingly may at God's deliverances, far better is it in the spirit of Daniel to be alone with God in self-abasement. (Compare Zech. xii. 12--14.) As little as the returned captives did Daniel know of the conflict in heavenly places upon his account between Michael and the angel of evil; but how evident is it that the attitude and exercises of his soul during the coincident period, indicate how truly his heart was in communion with unseen things above! And how much higher a thing is that for us, if indeed we know anything of conflict in the heavenlies, than any earthly mercy or deliverance, however great! Thus when the time of crisis comes, if our desire is that the issue should be in renewed spiritual power, in divine encouragement, in a fuller knowledge of His counsels, and above all in the eye being really opened upon the Lord of glory Himself, let

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each servant of God take a lesson from the "man greatly beloved."

The Lord give us to covet for ourselves and for His saints generally, a deeper sense of what it is that His heart appreciates most.

W. R.

D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE RIGHT WAY—HOW KNOWN?

THERE is only one right way, though there may be many modifications of it. Unless this be admitted, Christianity in itself has not been truly accepted. A perfectly divine path from the infant's weakest hour up to the strength of manhood, and in service to God fully on this earth, was tracked out by the Son of God—the perfect Man. He was always right, and no one is right now who does not follow in the spirit of His steps. To open this out, and to expose the varied ways by which the man of God may be diverted from the path, is the object of this paper.

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What especially marked our blessed Lord, who was always right, was that God was with Him, and He could say, "Thou hearest me always." "The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." One great mark is always attached to the one fully right, even this, "Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." God was always with Christ. He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. The other mark is, the assured sense of having the ear of God. "His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." The one who is right is sure to have these two marks. One is the more visible, the other is exclusively for the comfort of his own heart.

Now in order to be right, one must follow the Lord, one must walk here as He walked. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. This is the first thing; for I conclude that every one would agree that no one could be right unless he was following

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came to him in the hour of suffering to cheer him, but this was not because of what he did at Jerusalem, but because of his faithfulness before he came there.

It is most encouraging that if like the children of the captivity in Babylon, I am set for God here, He will give me an open door—a door open to faith; not one that every natural eye can see, but according as it is to God I am looking; He sheds the light of His own eye on the path for me. I am assured by Himself that I am right, and He enables me by His light to help His own, and even my opposers, as Abraham to Lot, or Moses to Miriam, and thus to work conviction in them that there is a right path, and that I am in it, for God is with me and I have His ear.

“OUR GOD.”

“I ASCEND unto my God and your God,” was part of the risen Saviour’s message by Mary Magdalene to His brethren. (John xx. 17.) What is the significance of it? Every one could

not thus speak of God. Every creature ought to own Him and obey Him : but every human creature is not authorised to say of Him "my God." God was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob (Ex. iii. 6), and He was not ashamed to be called their God. (Heb. xi. 16.) But He was not the God of the king of Egypt of Abraham's day, nor the God of the Pharaoh of the Exodus; nor could Abimelech, the Philistine king, have thus spoken of Him, though God did communicate with him by a dream. (Gen. xx., xxi.)

It is a special privilege then for people to know that God is their God. This Israel learnt at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. Their redemption by the arm of His power was a token of it. (Ex. vi. 7.) Bread and flesh provided for them in the wilderness was a further proof of it (chap. xvi. 12); and as their God He would dwell among them, when His tabernacle should be reared up in their midst. (Chap. xxix. 46.) Redemption, ministering to their need, and dwelling among them, these favours

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were proofs that the Lord was their God. He had taken them up when slaves in Egypt. He would carry them through the desert, providing bread for them throughout all their wilderness journey. He would dwell among them, delighting in them as His people. To these displays of divine goodness Israel could ever after point as tokens that Jehovah was their God. But not only could Israel speak of that privilege as theirs, their very enemies the Egyptians were conscious of it, as Moses told Pharaoh, when about to ask God to remove the plague of frogs, "That thou mayest know that there is none like unto the Lord our God." (Ex. viii. 10.)

These were national blessings common to all the redeemed people. Could the individual saint in Israel say, God was his God? The Father of Israel Jehovah was, yet no saint among them could, till the Lord Jesus came, call God his Father. They could however declare that God was their God, could address Him as such, and could count on Him as such. Relationship to Him by birth

was then unknown, but what it was to have Him as their God they could and did know. Daniel knew it, and could speak of Him to Darius as 'my God.' Before He entered the lions' den he knew it, and when in it he had proof of it, as the lions' mouths were shut by angelic agency called into exercise by God on His behalf; and Darius knew too and proclaimed it that the God of heaven, the living God, was the God of His faithful servant, the king's chief minister. (Dan. vi. 16, 22, 26.)

How well too David understood what it was to have Jehovah as his God. Exposed to the taunts and threats of his enemies, he turned to the Lord and poured out his heart to Him. "I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side; while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my God. My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me." (Ps. xxxi. 13-15.) The mighty

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One was on his side. He was his God. He asks for deliverance, and is sure that he will experience it. His God would not forsake him. Again, when driven out by Saul, an exile from his home, hunted and persecuted by the king, he turns to God in the wilderness, and addresses Him as his God. Adverse circumstances did not make David cease to be a saint. The opposition of man could not change God's position towards him. That he knew full well, so he says, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." (Ps. lxi. 1, 2.) To his God he thus turns, and awaits full deliverance. God was his God. He would not leave him for ever. What men of all classes are, bruised reeds indeed to lean on, Psalm lxii. 9 has declared. The confidence he can place in God to deliver him he expresses in Psalm lxi. 7.

(To be continued.)

J O H N'S G O S P E L.

Chapter vi. 22-40.

THE multitude meet the Lord on the other side of the lake, astonished to find Him there, knowing that there was not any other boat but His disciples' in the place where He had been. The Lord accuses them of seeking Him, not because they had seen the miracle, but because they had eaten the loaves and had been filled, and He exhorts them to seek that food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man would give them; for Him had God the Father sealed. (Vers. 26, 27.)

In the fifth chapter, Jesus is presented to us as Son of God; here, Son of man, and we shall see what faith works in Him as such. The legal question of the crowd (verse 28) rather vague and trivial, brings in this development. "What shall we do," they say, "that we may work the works of God?" "This is the work of God," the Lord replies; "that ye believe on

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that could not fail; here, it is the presentation of the Son of God as the object of faith; if one saw the Son, seeing through His humiliation, and believed upon Him, one should have everlasting life, and the same result would take place. In the first case then, it is a question of the Father's counsels and of His acts, as of those of Jesus in raising His saints from the dead: the Father gives them, Jesus raises them, not one of them is lost. Next we have the presentation of the Son in connection with man's responsibility: if a man believed, he would have eternal life, and would rise again. These are two sides brought near together, two aspects in which these great truths are presented.

“OUR GOD.”

(Continued from page 352.)

How well too his enemies understood what was involved in God being his God, as they asked him in their mocking, “Where is thy God?” (Ps. xlii. 3.)

That reproach went to his heart. (Ver. 10.) It cut him like a sword, yet God was his God, and as such he only the more turns to Him, and counts on Him. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Ver. 11.) Where is thy God? they had said. If He be that, why has He not rescued you? was the meaning of their taunt. He is my God, the suffering one could reply, and I shall yet praise Him. Then turning to God, he adds, looking forward to the future, "Yea upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God." (Ps. xliii. 4.) To be for ever cast off he knew was impossible.

By-and-by the remnant of that people over whom David once reigned, will be exposed, as he was, to the taunts of their enemies, who will say, "Where is their God?" Trusting to Jehovah the living God, and as yet no deliverance wrought on their behalf, the worshippers of idols, and apostates too, apparently

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flourishing, and they oppressed, one can understand somewhat the feeling of their hearts, as they hear the derisive speech of those bitterly opposed to them, "Where is now their God?" There was One then that the saints owned, and knew was their God, in whom their very enemies confessed that they had no part. Their gods could be seen on every hand, namely, idols of wood and stone. The God of whom the saints spoke was not visible to any one of them, and as yet His power had not been put forth to deliver His people. Who was He? Where was He? The persecuted but faithful confessors know, and can answer, "Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." (Ps. cxv. 2, 3.) The heathen were trusting to idols, dumb, lifeless, breathless things. The saints owned Jehovah, whose delivering power they knew they would publicly celebrate in the courts of His house at Jerusalem. (Psalm cxvi. 18, 19.) Patience they were called to exercise, but in the end

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they must be delivered, and preserved alive upon earth, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Ver. 15.) Thus God's servants and God's enemies alike can understand what is involved in, and what is expected from, God being His people's God. Delivering power when needed will be exercised on their behalf. God's glory is concerned in that, and He will sustain His saints and turn their sorrow into gladness. The night of weeping must, if Jehovah is their God, be exchanged for the morning of rejoicing. But in accordance with Old Testament revelation, deliverance on earth was the proper expectation of all those who could use such language. Saints in the past have proved it. Saints in the future will not be disappointed of it.

Strange then it must have seemed, if any one understood it before the cross, to read of one who could say in truth "my God," and yet have to add "Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. xxii. 1.) God was his God. He had been that from his mother's womb (ver. 10), yet

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he was brought by God into the dust of death. (Ver. 15.) For Him on this side of the grave there was no deliverance. That was something new as he declares. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them." (Ver. 4.) So none of them could use in its fulness the language which came from His lips. We know why deliverance came not to Him before death. But we know it did come after it. In resurrection God was seen to be His God. Death did not change that. His God before His death, He was His God after it, as He declares in John xx., and as Psalm xlv. 7 teaches. So saints in the present economy, knowing God as their God, if they prove not His delivering power here, will surely enjoy it in the future, but in the resurrection. Meanwhile all that we need for present supply we can count on from Him, as Paul teaches us, who having learnt somewhat of the fulness of His resources, could write, "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 19.)

THE CHRISTIAN MOTTO.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”
John iii. 30.

THESE early words of John the Baptist contain a truth to which we do well to recall our hearts in these days of self pleasing and feverish religious activity, for there is a tendency to exalt man—to place one man against another while keeping Christ, the true One to be exalted out of our thoughts, and our poor hearts are so easily led that they readily fall into and accept it. The information that a greater than he had arisen, to whom multitudes were being attracted, produced no envy in the heart of John. Albeit that “the same baptizeth” was an error (for Jesus baptized not, but His disciples), yet His growing *notoriety* was all right, and like the star fading away before the rising sun, John takes his place, content to be hidden and enveloped in His rays. It was as it should be, and it is God’s “*must*” which John accepted

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for himself, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

In olden times it was customary for the opposing parties to have a "battle cry" when engaged in mortal combat with the foe. What more suited one can *we* have than what this short motto supplies? It stated the individual interest in the conflict, and so does this. It declares the giving up of *self* in all its varied and subtle forms and desires, in order that Christ alone may be exalted. Have we entered into the conflict with this motto? In everything is this *our* battle cry? If so, such soldiers cannot be overcome by the enemy. Death may lie in the path wherein we walk, and in which we "wrestle not with flesh and blood," but we are bidden to "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." For the Christian is told, if the worst come, that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord," and is *this* being overcome?

Well had it been for the Baptist's

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continued peace of mind, had he always retained upon his heart the truth contained in the words he had uttered! But the solitary gloom of a prison was an occasion which was used of the enemy to test his faith, and it does not obtain from him the utterance of the same triumphant war-cry in the presence of his enemy as it did in John iii. when the enemy was foiled, self-being abased, and Jesus exalted. We trace a measure of restlessness in the sending to Jesus two of His own disciples, and a measure of doubt in his question, "Art thou he that should come or look we for another?" Do we not all know something of what this perturbed state of soul is? We know the truth, "I must decrease," and there is a measure of acceptance of it, but we had not counted on *this* way of its accomplishment; a prison was around John, and perhaps death before him, and he was disturbed! What will be the *mode* whereby God will make it good to us and in us, we must be content to leave wholly with Him. Without

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this confidence, there is a little corner in the heart on which Satan can work at any time to the distraction of the soul. But the truth is enough for us, the working of it out, His to order. We see in the first case Satan was met at the outposts with it, and *was defeated*, in the other that he was admitted within, and the servant of God was distressed.

Oh, it is a solemn thing, but a real thing if we see what is involved in it, for any soul to be able to say in all simplicity and reality—sincere in the desire before God, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” To be in the habit of saying, “Well, it matters not to me these circumstances wherein *I* suffer, so that *He* is exalted, and since I know that this cannot be seen in *my* path, but in my being abased, I am content.” If one may be allowed to utter a warning note to one’s own heart and to the hearts of his brethren, it is, “Let us beware how we engage in the conflict without it—let us count the cost, lest we too being overcome,

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become in our turn but the sport and derision of the enemy."

Allow me now, my brethren, to ask you, and we will seek together an answer from the word of God—What are the things and what is the manner whereby He wills that each of us "must decrease"? And in order to this, I would first dwell a little on what a Christian is, and already possesses.

I assume then, and state it at once as a starting ground which none can gainsay, that all that the world has to give can add *nothing* to the child of God; that he is one, rich beyond all expression, and blessed beyond all compare; blessed now "with *all* spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i.) What indeed can you add to one who is "Heir of God, and *joint-heir with CHRIST*"? Is it not true that "He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich"? And rich we **ARE**, since, says the apostle Paul, "*All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or*

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life, or death, or things present, or things to come, *all are yours*, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii.) Is it not true that "as he [Christ] is, so are we in this world," and loved by the Father with the same love with which He loved and still loves His beloved Son? (1 John iv. 17; John xvii. 23, 26.) "As Christ is." Consider it, beloved, and say whether human language can present to you anything greater, or if earthly glory can add anything to HIM, and such are we "in this world."

Since therefore, nothing possessed here below can add anything to the Christian, it is equally sure that nothing can make him other than what he is, or take from him what he possesses. "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i.) is his *individual* position as looked at *now*, while to be the vessel wherein shall be displayed "the exceeding riches of his grace" all through the coming and eternal ages, is the future part of God's purpose respecting him. Blessed is

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that man who in the view and face of it all, has learnt "therewith to be content:" while all he requires here is (if good for him) also meted out to him in the necessary food of the body and the raiment he wears, coming in the fulness of divine grace direct from the heart of Him "who knoweth that we have *need* of all these things." How often is the manner and way of His grace towards us neither dwelt upon nor enjoyed! How little the heart draws and drinks from its own well! "The water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water," with drinking from which is connected "*never hunger—never thirst.*" (John iv.)

These our spiritual blessings therefore *are* ours, and they know no wane and suffer no decay. It is not in *these* that I have to "decrease," and increased they cannot be, were you to give me anything or everything found upon earth. I would draw your attention then to what is the line of things wherein we "*must* decrease," as brought before us by the Holy Ghost in the words of

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the apostle Paul in Philippians iii. and without which there can be no advance in the things of God. Paul is most positive in what he teaches here concerning it, as he is also in Romans vi. The whole passage (Phil. iii. 1-6) is most interesting, for it was nothing but *good* things (religious as men speak) that the apostle boasted of, yet the whole appears to me to be condensed in the description which he gives of them in verse 7, "What things were gain to me." These last three words stamped them, every one; they were "gain" to him, he was *increasing*, not *decreasing*, so much the more went down in his favour and to *his* account. What was this, but a daily and increasing satisfaction with *himself*, what he was, and what he possessed? But, my brethren, if this be what we can glory in, if these will weigh in our favour or satisfy God as they appear to satisfy us, there can be no need for the atonement and death of His Son. And it was this latter that Saul of Tarsus hated and sought to stamp out the very

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remembrance of (with all those who boasted in it) from the earth on which he trod, for it makes nothing of man and his works. And if works will suffice, any one may work his own way to heaven, and take credit to himself in these works; but if works to obtain salvation, are useless *before* the atonement of Christ was made known to the soul, they only foster pride if rested in *after* that work is accomplished. It is in all that which exalts me—me as the world's *good religious man* as well as in all that exalts me as a worldly man, these are the things wherein I have to “*decrease.*”

(*To be continued.*)

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

ENSAMPLES TO THE FLOCK.

CONSTANTLY the Apostle Paul gives himself as the model of the truth which he inculcates. “Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do, and the