

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 vi. 40-58.

THE Jews murmured because the Lord said that He had come down from heaven. They saw the Son, and did not believe in Him: they knew Him after the flesh; He was Joseph's son for them. The Lord then insists upon the fact that no one can come unto Him, unless the Father draw him; He insists upon the need of grace to be able to come, not that every one was not free to come, as people say, for whosoever should see the Son and believe on Him would have eternal life; but He shews that the affection of the flesh is enmity against God. There is the blinding of sin, of the flesh, and the hatred of God, as far as ever He reveals Himself; there is no one that under-

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demned for us. In receiving, by faith, Christ's death as the absolute condemnation of that which I am, I have part in the efficacy of that which He has done: sin has been before God, and has disappeared from before His eyes in the death of Christ, who besides, never knew it. I say in my own mind; that is myself. I eat it; I place myself there by the operation of the Spirit of God, not that I believe that it is personally for me, but I recognise what death means, and I place myself in it by faith in Christ.

(To be continued.)

THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE GENTILES.

PAUL was an apostle of the Gentiles, and the special character of his apostleship the rest of the apostolic college distinctly recognised. (Gal. ii. 7.)

He received his commission direct from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, on the first occasion that he saw Him and

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heard Him; and his sphere of service was communicated to him on that day—eventful to him and to us—ere he left the spot near Damascus, on which he was converted. From the time, then, of his conversion he was acquainted with it. But when standing before the Roman governor, Festus, at Cæsarea, with the great Roman officials of the province as listeners, Paul, for the first time that we read of, made known publicly the terms of that divine commission with which he was entrusted, and in which the Gentiles had such interest. “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee: delivering thee [or taking thee out] from the people [that is, the Jews], and from the Gentiles, unto whom* I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they

* “Now” is omitted here by all uncial MSS and most versions.

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may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 16-18.)

His apostolic mission thus announced, the time for his work among the Gentiles to commence was afterwards made known to him. And two years before he detailed the terms of his commission above quoted, he had let his countrymen hear, in a tongue dear to their hearts, after what time and under what circumstances it was, that he went forth in fulfilment of his divine call. He had been addressed in the temple at Jerusalem in words impossible to be misunderstood, which plainly told him, that the hour had come in the counsels of God when he was to go to the Gentiles. "Depart," the Lord Jesus had said to him, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts xxii. 21.)

It was a fact of the greatest significance for the Jews that he had that vision in the temple at Jerusalem. He there saw again the One who had arrested him on his journey to Damas-

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cus, against whom the Jews were still so bitter. The Lord Jesus when on earth had vindicated His claims to be the Son of God, and Jehovah, by His ways and by His miracles, wrought in that house in His own name. (Matt. xxi. 14.) Now, though He had been condemned years before by the Jewish council as a blasphemer, and had suffered the death awarded by the Roman law, He appeared in the temple at Jerusalem, and gave to Paul that message quoted above. In that which was viewed by the Jews as the holy place (Acts vi. 13), the crucified One appeared, and the only divine communication that scripture records received within its enclosure after His death, came from Himself to His servant, the apostle of the Gentiles. Jehovah, the God of Israel, would work in the fullest grace amongst those who had no part in the privileges and inheritance of His earthly people.

Sent forth on his mission, the opposition of the Jews to the truth he experienced where he went, when

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offering grace to the Gentiles. And if they could not prevent the proclamation of divine grace reaching their ears, they aroused the spirit of persecution, and succeeded at times in driving away from places the preachers of the gospel. (Acts xiv. 2-6, 19; xvii. 5-14; xviii. 12.) But other dangers to the work arose. The enemy, when he could not stop it by force, attempted to ruin it by corruption. Judaising teaching came in, which, had it been allowed to go on unchecked, would have sapped the very foundations of Christianity. This called forth in defence of the truth the apostle of the Gentiles, who, as he tells the Galatians, would not yield one iota to Judaising teaching, in order that the truth of the gospel might continue with those who had been Gentiles. (Gal. ii. 4-5.)

Going up to Jerusalem in the course of his third missionary journey, with alms from the churches of Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia, for the poor saints at Jerusalem, a manifest proof that the truth which he preached made those

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once Gentiles own the existence of a bond formerly unknown between them and those who had been Jews, he was put in prison in Judea, and sent a prisoner to be tried by the emperor himself in Rome. So he arrived at the capital of the habitable world a prisoner in bonds — “the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you,” he writes to the Ephesians, “the Gentiles.” It was the maintenance of the truth of the grace of God, flowing out equally to those who had been Gentiles as to those who had been Jews, that provoked against him the unappeasable hostility of his own countrymen. Had he Judaised he might have been left in comparative peace. But his fidelity to the truth and to the objects of his apostleship exposed him to dangers and troubles from which others in Judea, it would appear, were after a time exempt.

An apostle of Gentiles, a teacher, too, of Gentiles, such was he whilst actively engaged in work. In prison he can describe himself in a different and unique way : “*the prisoner of Christ*

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Jesus for you the Gentiles." This was enough to move their hearts. His service on their behalf, and his contending for the truth at Antioch and Jerusalem were matters well known. At Rome he was giving the strongest proof he could, short of a martyr's death, of his unswerving fidelity to the Master he served, and of his unabated desire for the continuance unimpaired among the saints of the truth of the gospel, and of the full revelation of the counsels of God, of which he had been the chosen channel to make them known to the whole church of God.

Paul valued the truth—he understood how intimately Gentiles were concerned in it. He suffered to maintain it, and tells us what the distinctive features of the mystery are, for fidelity to which he was a prisoner in Rome, namely, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus by the gospel. (Eph. iii. 6.) These different subjects he had mentioned in chapter i. of that epistle. All of them we

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learn were of great value in his eyes, and that not simply because they were blessings in which he had part, but as parts of God's revelation of the full unfolding of His mind, which embraced in the blessings thus announced those who had been Gentiles in common with those who had been Jews. The unselfish heart of Paul appears to great advantage in all this. A subject of divine grace himself, he entered into and rejoiced in God's counsels of grace, whoever might be subjects of it. Again, writing to Timothy, and speaking of his first answer before the emperor, we learn of what importance in his eyes was the truth of which he was the special exponent. "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me ; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." (2 Tim. iv. 17.)

Joint-partakers of God's promise in Christ Jesus, Gentiles could share equally with Jews in eternal life in Christ Jesus, promised before the world began (2 Tim. i. 3 ; Titus i. 2), and

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in all that is connected with it. As fellow-heirs, the inheritance bestowed on the Lord Jesus Christ, in which those who are His are to have part, believers from among them can and shall share in. Members, too, are such of His body, none closer to Christ than those who were once dead in trespasses and sins. If Paul suffered bonds and imprisonment to maintain all this, in which Gentiles are vitally interested, are Christians to shew indifference or supineness to any part of the truth for which he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles? Should such receive the tidings of life, and the hope of an inheritance, and forget, or shew no concern in the revelation about the body of Christ, and of all that is connected with it? Men do not generally suffer for a trifle. Few are willing to suffer bonds for a mere dogma. Paul suffered for all this truth, to maintain the testimony unimpaired on behalf of Gentiles. How much *we* owe, under God, to his faithfulness and boldness at Antioch, and in Rome.

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Should we be content to hold as mere dogma that for which he endured imprisonment? In his eyes it was precious, it was real, and it was to be practical. Through the recovery of the truth in these days we have the opportunity and the privilege of shewing what it is to us. Shall Christians use their opportunity, or let it slip?

THE CHRISTIAN MOTTO.

"He must increase, but I must decrease."
John iii. 30.

It is while living and walking about down here that we ought to be able nevertheless to say "I die daily," and what is a dead man but a useless man as to this world and one repulsive and obnoxious to all its schemes? And such we are in God's account: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And such we are to be practically. Is it comely for a Christian to be reaching after earthly honours, riches, reputation, or aught else here

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below, and if doing so, has *he* learnt the meaning of "He must increase, but I must decrease"? Is not the name of Christian (that worthy name upon you, by which ye are called) often scoffed and mocked at on these very points? because of the inconsistencies of those who bear it? Of the whole course of the Lord Jesus it is written, "He made himself of no reputation."

Alas, that it should not be so with all of us. Alas, that with even some of us here to-night God's finger is upon us, and our consciences are telling us as to this, "Thou art the man." Yet it is only by thus taking our true places before God as to these things with a real desire for Him to deal with us, that we are profited by speaking of them together. We are in our folly sacrificing the present enjoyment of the eternal, for the passing pleasure of the temporal, for no man can enjoy both. A remarkable illustration of this is given us if we turn to Hebrews xiii. There Esau comes before us, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." With

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the birthright went the blessing of the firstborn. But this blessing had especial reference to the future, to the Messiah who was to come, the promised seed, of which God had spoken to Abraham, in whom "all families of the earth" were to be blessed. (See Gen. xxviii. 3-15.) The mess of pottage, the satisfaction of the moment, the pleasing of nature, was preferred to the whole blessed range of God's promises by Esau; and what does scripture say of such? It calls Esau a "profane person"—one who preferred the enjoyment of the present to the glorious realities awaiting him in the future. It is the contrast between faith and sight.

My brethren, we too are blest. The blessing of the "Firstborn from the dead" is upon us. "Lifting up his hands he blessed them, and as he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." But it is not earthly but heavenly, not true for sight but real to faith. Are we enjoying it—making much of it? He is gone up.

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Thence He is coming again in "like manner." "Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" we are waiting for Him here, until the time comes when according to God's eternal purpose He will "gather together in one all things in Christ." (Eph. i. 9, 10.) Seeing that we have learnt, poor dull scholars, that in all things He shall "have the pre-eminence"—that it is God's *must* concerning Him. (1 Cor. xv. 25.) Are we saying and practically seeking to carry it out, "He must increase, but I must decrease"? Or are we like Esau despising the blessing, gathering to ourselves the poor passing and empty things of earth, none of which we can take with us, upon which (the flesh in us and all that ministers to it) our God hath stamped "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Ah, which is it with you? One thing is certain, we are each saying or practising in our ways day by day either this, "*He must increase,*" or this, "*I must increase,*" and you cannot change the one word without changing the other. If

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you say "I must *increase*" you must add, "He must *decrease*," and in our souls we bear witness that this is so. "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is seen daily in the condition and ways of God's people as to this very truth. Is it then your purpose to shew in your life that the words of John the Baptist are your motto? May it be so, and may the Lord give His word power over our souls for His name's sake.

H. C. A.

 THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

OUR CALLING, AND HOW DIVISIONS OCCUR.

WE must see and hold in faith our calling before we can understand a division. A division is a breaking away from our calling, and it must be known and followed in order to mark those who cause divisions and offences among you contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned. We shall look at our calling first in its varied phases.

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trespasses and sins, for he has known himself to have been there where Christ died to sin. Christ died there in grace, as sin condemned before God; and the sinner says to himself: "that is really myself; I am that in the flesh, and now Christ having offered Himself for that, God has made Him sin for us; but Christ in dying has done with sin, and therefore I have done with it too. There is then no existing relationship between God and the race of the first Adam: the death of Jesus has shewn forth this fact, when God had tried everything, even to the gift of His Son. God has done with all this race of the first man upon the cross; and as for me, I have done with sin, which was the basis of all this. Oh, how marvellous and perfect are God's ways, full of infinite grace!"

I recall it to mind that it is not here a question of our heavenly position at this moment: John, as we have said elsewhere, hardly ever speaks of it. Christ will raise up the believer at the last day. He speaks of His own

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ascension to complete the truth: come from heaven, He will go back there; but He does not associate us with Himself in heaven, as a present fruit of His ascension. For us, He goes on from His ascension to the resurrection of our bodies.

**“I HAVE SET BEFORE THEE
AN OPENED DOOR.”**

REVELATION III. 8.

THERE can be no doubt that the passage alluded to refers to our time, and that we should give heed to it. It has been so much brought into prominence that many are afraid of saying much about it, and others again accept it without duly considering its import.

Still there is the fact and the promise, and they are not to be forgotten; if we feel our weakness and failure, we should give the more diligent heed to what our Lord says about His work, as the time of His coming draws nigh.

A distinction should be made, as to

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this, between that which is merely outward, and the sure though quiet action of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord is carrying on His work in these last days. That the Lord *does* use outward and providential circumstances, and different means in different countries and places, there can be no doubt ; and they play a great part in the carrying out of His ways. But if we limit our view to this exterior part of the subject (as I believe many do), we shall fail to apprehend the force of the "opened door;" and our days are such that one may be very active and perform an immense amount of work, without being in the secret of the Master's mind.

To take a strong example of this, any one who has travelled in Catholic countries will be astonished at the well-meant though futile endeavours of some to convert them to Protestantism. They judge that because there is a certain religious liberty, they may go to work to carry out their hopeless scheme, unmindful of Thyatira's doom. It is not that souls may not be found

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and blessed even in such countries, but no power will ever convert the countries themselves. “I gave her time to repent,” saith the Lord, “and she hath not repented.” Such efforts are not according to the secret of the Lord’s mind.

This is the extreme case, but many others might be quoted: and indeed many, in the so-called religious world, see no further, than a great time of liberty for preaching, printing, and so diffusing christian truth. But there is something further, and there will be no true work for the Lord Jesus Christ in the present day unless it be by the Holy Ghost, who is working as surely in the midst of Christendom, both in converting souls, and in giving them light and power, as He was in the midst of Israel in Zechariah’s day. The answer which was given to the question about the two mystic olive-trees standing on either side of the golden candlestick, was: “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts,” and this applies

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now, though the circumstances be different. In our blessed Saviour's time too, the same might be said: He, the true Shepherd, found out all His scattered sheep by the Holy Spirit's action. "To him the porter openeth." (John x.) Again, all through the Acts, we see the distinct leading and action of the Holy Spirit, as well as outward opportunities.

We must understand the state of things around us to be in communion with the Lord in His present work. The remnant briefly alluded to in Zechariah's day made no pretension to the privileges of the nation, as though all were in perfect order. It was a time of general failure when Jehovah's Spirit was acting in a faithful few, and it has been noticed that a spiritual and intelligent state is necessary, to be able to distinguish the Holy Spirit's sovereign action in such a state of things. And so with us, although the Spirit abides in and with us in a far more blessed way:—we must remember that the church lost her beauty and

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strength at the very beginning. She was only seen for a very short time in her perfect form ; its *contour* was soon marred. If any one has watched an eclipse taking place soon after moon-rise, in a clear sky, he will have been struck by the sudden fading of the splendid globe, as the first withering shade of the penumbra comes upon her, and so on until total eclipse.

When one has understood a little, the present state of things, and given up all idea of converting the world, or reforming the church, and taken the place of a feeble remnant, the question very naturally presents itself : “ What would the Lord have us to do ? ” and the answer comes again : “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.” The Spirit which did not leave the remnant until Messiah came, dwells in us, and will dwell in us for ever ; and the Lord Jesus Christ will guide us at the present moment by His action.

A struggle is going on in our day, between human activity, means, and intelligence on the one hand, and the

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Holy Ghost on the other. As the final events of the church upon earth unroll themselves before us, we find almost a repetition of the scenes in Israel when Messiah first came. Dry religion, learning, and money of scribes, Pharisees and Herodians ;—and a feeble but Spirit-led remnant on the other, whose entire trust was in the Lord, and whose songs of superhuman beauty (Luke i. iii.), shew hearts true to Him, and finely strung by divine action.

In short, the Lord Jesus is acting as truly now by the Holy Ghost as in former times, and if any have been allowed to be faithful thus far (mis-trusting themselves, and cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart), the door is open before them. May we with earnest prayer and fasting look to the Lord that the current of the Holy Spirit's action be free, both amongst ourselves and in leading to individual service, and great blessing will surely follow. Each will find his place in that sphere where true service may be performed for the Lord Jesus Christ

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until His coming, for the door will not be closed till then. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."

E. L. B.

FOLLOWING THE LORD WHOLLY.

I BELIEVE a soul simply and wholly following the Lord *starts* with, and ever keeps, as the elixir of its life, that it has no one but the Lord—that it is alone with Him, and that the Lord is with it Himself alone. The interests of the Lord, the saints, &c., come in, in connection with the Lord; but to the soul itself there is an eminent commanding known singularity. The Lord is one, and His name one. "I am Jesus" stands out pre-eminently, the greater the crowd of associations and interests proper to Him, the more distinctly and peculiarly He stands out before the soul taught and earnest in following Him, and it cannot follow Him if it be otherwise. If, not in my heart only, but also in my intelligence, I do

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not know my Beloved as superior to all others in His attractive power and manifested beauty, and this especially whenever, or wherever, seen amid the dearest objects of His heart, in the circles of all His glories, or when entirely alone, then I am not true or able to follow the Lord *wholly*. If a mariner mistake one star for another he does not know his guiding star, and he is not following it.

The heart that knows anything of following the Lord wholly has acquired a sense and a force which none of his interests or concerns can rival or bear resemblance to. Like the holy anointing oil, or the holy perfume, there must not, there cannot successfully be any attempt to make anything like it.

Now this consciousness of following Him is not known unless there is unclouded intimacy with Him,—and this cannot be maintained, but as I know how He, by the ministry of His word, washes my feet, and wipes them, separating me virtually, by the power of it, from the defilements here which would

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morally cause distance between Him and me. The greater the love, the less the true heart can suffer any shade of distance or reserve to arise between it and the Lord. If it has arisen, the following must necessarily be suspended. Service for Christ may not cease, but the sense of nearness to Him which following implies is lost, because this shade of distance or reserve necessarily distracts the true heart, for it knows it has not regained its own place in nearness to Him, and nothing else will really suit or ought to satisfy it. This distance must be removed before the following known to the heart can be resumed. Peter can throw himself out of the ship to go to Jesus. There may be full confidence in Christ's forgiving love where there still is a distance or reserve which checks the heart and disqualifies it for the nearness which, as I have said already, following implies. I think it is *here* saints first part company, and I desire, and I trust will pray much, that you, Ittai like, may help on others by your simple earnest

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unequivocal following the Lord. If you fail here, you will be bewildered by the zeal and usefulness of many around you. If your hearts are true to Christ, the zeal and usefulness of others will be gratifying to you as far as He is the object of it, and your present reward is, Where I am there shall also my servant be, if any man serve Me, him shall my Father honour. The reward proves that you are following Him.

THE EFFECT OF HIS PRESENCE.

Nothing imparts such a sense of living power as personal presence, for there the measure of power is set forth. I believe that, though there may be great joy in the reception of truth, and known light in the soul through it, yet there is no right use of it, but as one sees the Lord. "If it be thou, bid me come unto thee." Thus with the disciples going to Emmaus, though their hearts burned within them through the word being so blessedly ministered unto

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them, and though there was real divine light; yet, until they had seen the Lord, there was no right action! It is as I am with Him, in His company, that I learn to keep His word. His word first keeps me (John xiii.), and then as I believe in Him, I am where He is, and love works in me where He is not.

DEVOTEDNESS LEARNS TO DO THE RIGHT THING.

DEVOTEDNESS has two characteristics. The first, which ensures the second, is that the Lord's presence is the one desire of the heart. Anything, everything, would be sacrificed for it. Devotedness is not really known but in proportion as this feeling is known. Mary Magdalene had in measure the first; one thing was indispensable to her, the Lord Himself: "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him;" and again, "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will

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take him away." We get it very fully expressed in the Canticles. No satisfaction of heart to the bride but in the presence of her Beloved. This Ruth also touchingly sets forth, when she said to Naomi, "Entreat her not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried."

But the brightest and most perfect example of it we get in Paul—Philip-
pians i. He longs to die, to surrender everything, that he might enjoy the presence of the Lord, that he might be with Christ. In him the first characteristic of devotedness is fully exemplified. His heart was so bent on being with Christ that no link here stood in the way. He preferred to break away from everything here in order that he might have the company of his Lord, who was the one object of his heart. This is the first characteristic, a desire to sacrifice life, and break every link here

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in order to enjoy the presence of the Lord without any interruption from oneself.

The second characteristic is, consulting His pleasure in everything I do. While present in the body I am absent from the Lord; but if I am so devoted in heart that His presence only can satisfy me, while absent from Him, I devote myself to everything belonging to Him, and the Lord, blessed be His name readily communicates His mind and pleasure to every one devoted to Him. There may be true affection for the Lord when there is not devotedness as I mean it. Jonathan loved David as his whole soul, but he would not encounter death to bear him company. Ruth would die to be with Naomi, and Paul desired to die that he might be with Christ.

Jonathan can strip himself to make much of David. True love makes little of itself to make much of its object, but he cannot leave his father's house for David. Orpah kisses Naomi, but she cannot give up her country and her

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people. Ruth is devoted, "Where thou goest I will go," and all her toil and interest is in connection with Naomi. She takes her place as a poor stranger gleaning after the reapers under a scorching sun, all to please and comfort Naomi—and surely she did the right thing. Mary of Bethany anointed our Lord at the right moment; she, the most devoted of the family, did the right thing. Mary Magdalene was rewarded for her devotedness. The Lord communicates to her three things: First, The new relation in which the saints will be now to Him; secondly, where He was going, and thirdly, that His God and His Father would be our God and Father; and she was to tell this to His disciples. She in absenting herself from Him, devotes herself to His people according to His expressed desire—she surely does the right thing.

Still more fully we see this in Paul. No one more devoted than he in desiring to give up everything here, life and all, to be with Christ; but he finds he is to stay here still present in the body and

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absent from the Lord. The interests of the church, the object of Christ's heart, claim all his attention, and as he had desired to die to be with Christ, he now can say that he would die for His people. "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith I joy and rejoice with you all." And surely he was doing the right thing, and his devoted heart was satisfied in fulfilling the pleasure of his Lord.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

AN INTELLECTUAL RECEIVER OF TRUTH IS AN OPPOSER OF IT.

WHEN two profess to see the same truth, and one pursues a course quite different from that adopted by the other, the judgment is, that as the truth cannot produce two different effects, there must be some great discrepancy as to the way in which the truth has been received, and in this, as in everything else, the natural mind is enmity against God. The apostle evidently conveys

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remarked that it is not the unity of Christians, or unity of doctrine, it is not any unity but the unity of the Spirit. Breaking the unity is not a mere differing from one or more. All might be wrong, but one is either in the unity of the Spirit, or breaking it, and this can never be understood but as there is faith in the power of God. The Lord awaken each of His people everywhere to the gravity of this subject, even that the worst opposer of any truth is the intellectual apprehender of it.

FRAGMENT.

IN our service we should be always in immediate contact with Christ, to bring out nothing else, but according to divine wisdom and guidance in dealing with others. And it should be recollectively so ; it is not merely that Christ is the object in the main, but there is another thing—the not being distracted, and also having our object recollectively, constantly carrying it about with us.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter vi. 61-71.

THERE is one more remark I should like to make; I have spoken of the incarnation and death of the Lord; and that, as concerns what took place here in this chapter, it is the knowledge of these things that gives us a clear understanding, and delivers our souls. But the Lord says, in verses 40, 47, that He is come, that whosoever believeth in Him *may have* everlasting life, and that he that believeth on Him *hath* everlasting life; so that whosoever really sees the Son of God in the despised man of Nazareth, hath everlasting life. But the Lord does not hide the full bearing of this fact; His rejection and death could be the only consequence of His presentation to a world such as the one in which we live, and to which we belong according to the flesh; it is important we should know it.

In answering the Jews, who were scandalized at the fact of His ascension,

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accept the sufferings of his Master, who called him Satan on that occasion when the flesh shewed the power it exercised upon him. Still the need was there at bottom in Peter ; the desire to possess eternal life was awakened in him ; he was conscious that this life was to be found only in Jesus, and that He was the sent One of God, that He was come from God : Jesus had the words of eternal life. However confused Peter's views might be, Peter thought of the question of eternal life, with the need of possessing it himself ; he believed and knew that Christ had the words which revealed it, and communicated it by grace, and that He was the Holy One of God, the One whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world. True faith was there, as well as the needs which God produces in the soul. There was no knowledge of the deep truths which Christ was teaching, nor of the persons for whom Peter answered when he said, "*we* ;" but the soul's needs were felt, and there was faith in Christ's words and person ;

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Peter too was kept, through many falls, so as to be faithful to the Saviour to the end, and the Lord confided to his care the sheep and lambs He loved;—that is the apostle's ministry amongst the Jews;—and also gave him to be the first to let in the Gentiles. It is interesting to see that if the knowledge of the truths taught in this passage was wanting, nevertheless if there was true faith in the words and person of Jesus, as the One whom God had sent (not merely as a prophet who spoke that which God gave him to say, but as being personally *the* Holy One of God, who had the words of eternal life);—if this faith existed, the believer possessed this eternal life; he possessed everything.

THE BEAUTY AND BLESSEDNESS
OF PLEASING GOD.

It is a sorrowful admission that the saints of God in this day know so little of pleasing God. A true position faithfully held, and recovered truths

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sincerely valued and diligently disseminated, with but little spirituality, but little communion, but little pleasing God ! Alas, in many cases the former take the place of the latter.

It may be asked, what is spirituality ? Definitions are dangerous, for to define is to limit, and to limit may mislead. But I suggest that our spirituality is that measure or degree (ever less than perfect) in which we are truly under the welcome control of an ungrieved Spirit. It is neither pietism nor legality. No pietist or legalist is truly spiritual, for the spring of his devotedness, however genuine, is not of the Spirit of God. Pietism and legalism, whatever their form, express unsatisfied aims and desires for one's self and equally unsatisfied exactions from others. On the other hand, a self-satisfied is a carnal person. Spirituality is in its essence the very opposite ; in true self-abnegation, it expresses what through grace we are and what through grace we have, but like Joseph's branches it must needs run over the wall,

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communicating of its rich and teeming luxuriance in beauty and blessedness to others, and whilst creating and fostering a taste for divine and eternal realities it impresses them most of all with the wealth of spiritual blessing we luxuriate in, and cannot but commend. "Blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast and of the womb—unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." The blessing of the true Joseph, the separated One to whom we are separated, whose blessing is ours.

To return, pietism *affects*; legalism *exacts*; spirituality *commends*. The two former yield nothing as to communion, indicating no less an absence of it than an unfitness for it. They chill, they constrain, they oppress their subjects, surrounding them with an atmosphere as deadly as it is depressing, as dense as it is dark. But spirituality cheers, elevates, illuminates. The action of

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the former is to deter, restrain, repress the evil, but of constraint only, while that of the latter is to evolve, expand and express the good, as the flower opens to the sun, not laboriously but spontaneously, and beams with the beauty derived from its rays. Thus the more spiritual a person is the more he draws out from another, whatever there is of Christ in him. They enjoy Christ together, and while longing for deeper draughts of divine joy, the joy of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father, that enjoyment and delight of heart which is a positive experience and present possession richly predominates. Spirituality, then, is the spring of communion between saints, and no less so between them and Christ, between them and the Father. My spirituality determines my capacity for such communion, and my joy therein. And the greater my spirituality, the more I discover that the beauty of a saint and his blessedness consist in pleasing God; the deeper also my delight in it, and the fuller my capacity for it.

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Thus to please God is no dispensational thing, but the Spirit's work in all ages. Not only before the church but before the flood, the Holy Ghost records that one while yet treading this earth had this testimony that he pleased God. Nor is it simply that Enoch did this, but God gave *testimony to him* that he did. This is deeply important as embodying a divine principle, that he who pleases God, himself gets from Him the Spirit's testimony that he does. Noah not only found grace in the eyes of the Lord, but is distinctly told by God, "thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Job was signally commended of God, both before and after being put in the crucible. Abraham had many experiences of the divine approval, and was again and again certified of it. The Lord spake unto Moses face to face as a man speaketh to his friend, and not only said *of* him while yet alive, "My servant Moses who is faithful in all mine house," but *to* him "thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." Caleb and Joshua had each

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His distinct favour, being exempted by name from falling in the wilderness, and brought as the only survivors of the adult company into Canaan because they pleased God; and then to Joshua in direct terms was it said, "the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." In the closing strains of Deborah's song she chanted, "let them that love him (Jehovah) be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might," and as if in answer to this in the next chapter (Judges vi.), we read that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, and said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." David had precious testimony of the Lord's approval, "I took thee from the shepcote, I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked.—Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies.—Furthermore I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house," &c. And yet another striking instance of the announcement of divine approval is seen in Ezekiel xiv.: Jehovah says, by the mouth of that prophet, "Though these three men, Noah,

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Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Now what adds exceeding interest to this is the fact that Daniel was at this time *living*, and doubtless known to Ezekiel, but his name is put between two other righteous and honoured servants of God, who had been in their graves for many centuries. Moreover he was divinely addressed as "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved," and a second time in almost identical terms. How truly do these Old Testament cases make good the words of the psalmist, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people; he will beautify the meek with salvation."

As to the New Testament, did John the Baptist faithfully herald his Master, he is commended of Him as no greater born of women. Did babes and sucklings chant hosannas to His name, they are commended of Him as perfecting praise. Did Mary recline at His feet, she is commended of Him as choos-

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ing that good part never to be taken away. Did the woman of the city bathe those feet with her tears, she is commended of Him as loving much. Did Maryanoint His person with her precious spikenard, she is commended of Him for having done what she could—a memorial to her throughout the whole world wheresoever the gospel should be preached. Did the Magdalene linger at His sepulchre with breaking heart because of His absence, she is rewarded by the first interview with the risen Lord, is called by name, made the first witness of His resurrection, and the herald of His ascension! Truly nothing that is done to Him can fail of His appreciation, and with delight of heart we learn how He loves to give it recognition. All will remember the grace of the Lord in revealing Himself to His servant Paul in the temple, in the prison, in the ship, and standing with him at the judgment-seat strengthening him in the presence of the lion.

But not such *manifestations* as these are what we look for as to the *manner* of

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the Lord's approval. Yet the principle remains, and what I contend for in its deep importance to us all, is the blessed fact that the Lord delights to make known to us by His Spirit when we please Him. "They that are in the flesh cannot please him." "Without faith it is impossible to please him." "Even Christ pleased not himself." He could say, "*I do always those things that please him.*" The aim of the Spirit of God is to carry us on in the steps of Him who did *always* the things that pleased His Father, and to comfort and encourage us by the delight of heart which His approval gives. So urged the apostle, "that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."

Do any ask, How are we to please God? I answer, Love quickly learns what suits and pleases its object. Nor are we left without specific instruction. Children are to obey their "parents in *all things*; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Wives to be adorned with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,

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which is in the sight of God of great price." The evangelist is put in trust with the gospel to speak "not as pleasing men but God which trieth our hearts." Saints as beloved of God, to have confidence toward Him, receiving from Him what they ask, because they "keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." As good soldiers of Jesus Christ we are not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life, that we "may please him" who hath chosen us to be soldiers. That which is ministered to the Lord's servants is specifically spoken of as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." The sacrifice of praise to God and that of doing good and communicating, are put in the same category, and "with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." Lastly, the apostle prays the God of peace to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us "that which is well-pleasing in his sight." Surely none will say that these means of pleasing Him are beyond us. Are they not the simplest

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and most accessible a true heart could desire ?

And as to the corporate thing, were saints in the habit of soul that walks with God and pleases Him as Enoch did, surely when a crisis comes upon the testimony, the agitation and disturbance in which many are plunged would have no place. A calm, sober judgment discerning that which is wheat and that which is chaff, would prevail. Those who take forth the precious from the vile would be as God's mouth. That which is of God, and in so far only as it is of Him, would be discerned and approved. And should it carry sorrow because of wounded and severed hearts, it would convey as plenteously the divinely-given comfort of His own commendation, the testimony that we please God.

May the Lord in His grace teach us to covet this high distinction at His hand, and to cultivate that communion with Himself to which true spirituality both invites and conducts, and which can alone qualify us for taking such a degree.

W. R.

INDIFFERENCE—NEUTRALITY— SELF-ASSERTION.

(REV. III.)

It will be found that these three are the great leading features of the professing church, fully developed in its last phase; and those whose eyes are both opened and anointed at the present time, see very distinctly how rapidly the growth of these evil principles are being developed, so that all the elements which will reach maturity in full-blown Laodiceanism, are being, as it were, rapidly hurried to the front. But to see this in the midst of the clouds of dust which Satan is perpetually raising, there must be that which scripture describes as the “senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Now the first great mark of infection with this evil principle is the indifference to Christ as Lord, which very plainly displays itself, though in a form and guise which deceive the unwary. It is true that *in terms* the authority of Christ

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is not denied, but *practically* it is not recognised. And moreover there are various shades of this, as of every evil thing; but the question is, not the amount which may be accredited to us, but whether we are, through grace, entirely apart from it ourselves. Has He not of late, as our Lord, given a very solemn proof of His authority as well as His right to sift and try and test that with which His name has been, and, through grace, is still associated on earth? And are there not many ways and forms of saying to Him, "What doest thou?" Now what shall we say to the Lord's contention, the Lord's test, the Lord's voice like many waters, and the Lord's eyes as a flame of fire? Alas for us all if our eyes are not open to see this, and if we can rise no higher than men and their ways!

But it is solemn to remember how the road has been prepared, so that His way should not be perceived. The enemy has skilfully set traps to catch the feet of the saints of God. It is well for us to remember the *character* of

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his opposition now ; *violence* and *corruption* are the two great weapons by which Satan has wrought from the first, and the last is the more to be dreaded, because more subtle. “ The wiles of the devil ” have now to be withstood on God’s ground, and we need the whole armour of God, buckled on, and the spirit of dependence maintained in order successfully to resist the foe. Where this is not the case, as the story of the Gibeonites in Joshua sorrowfully illustrates, we fall a prey to the corrupting wiles of the devil ; and it will display itself where the battle rages most fiercely. In Laodicea there will be an indifference to Christ as Lord, which is deeply heart-breaking. There will be a lack of conscience and spiritual affection which would secure His blessed name being associated with that which is repugnant to Him who is holy and true ; and lastly, where this corruption gets sway there will be exhibited an antagonism to His thoughts and mind which is most solemn to contemplate.

The next characteristic mark of the

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professing church in its closing state, is *neutrality*; “neither cold nor hot.” It is very solemn to see that indifference to Christ, is the producing cause of this lukewarm state. In Laodicea He is *outside*, and they are neutral *inside*! As to *evil*, the saints if true to Christ would be intolerant; patience and long suffering would assuredly mark them in their mode of acting as well as in their spirit—but where these blessed qualities are pleaded for a toleration of sin, and a course of action is attempted, to be founded or based upon this, it is clearly the spirit of this *neutrality* concerning which the Lord says to Laodicea in His indignation, “I would thou wert cold or hot.” Moreover, on heavenly ground, there can be no such principle. “Art thou for us or for our adversaries?”—is the abiding illustration and witness of this great fact. And may I not appeal to another solemn witness of what I am setting forth? If the history of God’s testimony during the past half-century, be prayerfully read and pondered, it will be seen that at this very day, the

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fruit of this very principle of neutrality abides. Oh, for eyes to see, and hearts to feel for Christ in all this ; thus it will be clear to us as taught of God, that the path of safety is the path of faith, and that holiness is, as it were, the very pavement of that way, and Christ the company which those who are for Him enjoy as walking in it : this and this alone can suit Him, and He gives us to know how blessed it is for us, and so we rejoice that “there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen : the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it”—it is a *divine* path and *outside*, because above the most acute creature wisdom and ken—moreover this wisdom cannot be procured by man as such, for he “knoweth not the price thereof ; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith it is not in me, and the sea saith, it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. . . . The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,

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neither shall it be valued with pure gold." Such then is the *nature* and *value* of the path of faith and wisdom in God's estimate of it, and when He further proclaims its character unto men, mark well His words—"Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom : *and to depart from evil that is understanding.*" (Job xxviii.)

The last feature in Laodicea, which I would notice here, is the miserable *self-assertion* and *self-complacency* evinced in the language, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Oh, conceive such words, and the blessed Lord outside ! This is the full development of Laodiceanism ; it is found alongside indifference to Christ and a lukewarmness which is neither cold nor hot. Does it not become all His saints to watch against *this spirit* ? He calls it "*miserable and poor.*" Alas ! how soon any of us might be corrupted and infected with it ; and things which are all right in themselves may be used by Satan in his wiles to invest us with this spirit ; for instance, if ourselves, our service, our work, our usefulness,

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are before our eyes instead of Christ, how soon the spirit of Laodicea will enfold us in the meshes of its self-complacent net ! Christ alone is our safety and rest. To keep *His word* and not deny *His name* is the reach of "little strength;" yet is it also our preservation as our comfort and joy.

May the Lord, in great grace, preserve His own in this day from the principles we have been reviewing, and may He also, in sovereign mercy, rescue from their power and influence, any who have fallen under them.

W. T. T.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE PRESENT TESTIMONY.

THE nearer we come to the Bridegroom, the better are we prepared for Him. "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." The cry, "Behold the Bridegroom, come out to the meeting," awoke up the slumbering virgins. A great reviving of souls, and

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recovery of truth, followed from this cry, and surely to testify of Him until He comes, must characterise the bride as she apprehends the advent of the Bridegroom. Affection is kindled as the hope of seeing Him increases, and as the heart is fixed on the bright and morning star, the more do we drop the things of the night, and are really with trimmed lamps, coming forth to meet Him.

Much light and truth, we know, have been vouchsafed consequent on this cry, but the end and object of the cry must not be lost sight of on account of anything, however great, conferred in connection with it. The cry has produced the revival. It occupies the heart with its one true object, and the one who not only satisfies it, but, as He is its object, furnishes it with grace to be more fully so. If the cry, then, be overlooked for some of the great truths restored to those who have answered to the cry, the result would be as if one were occupied with a fine flower, or the great branch of a tree, severed from its

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found neither in the one class, nor in the other. As to Jesus; "his hour was not yet come;" His hour, remark, is the hour when He gave Himself on the cross for our sins.

THE BEGINNING.

IN order to form a right judgment respecting the present position of any existing divine appointment on the earth and in the hands of man, it is necessary to ascertain with great accuracy what it was at the beginning. The beginning must have been perfectly in order, and there could not then be any of the omissions as to its scope and mission, which do occur through man's unbelief and self-sufficiency; or any of the human additions which man, in his ignorant wisdom, may have tacked on to it. The Lord determines and annuls divorce, though legalised by Moses, by the simple statement, "From the beginning it was not so." The qualifying of God's order can come in because of

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the hardness of man's heart, but if you would have to do with God, and not man, you must revert to the beginning before an alteration was made to meet man's need. When we recur to the beginning we see the thing as it came from God ; we can hardly estimate any light more important, or more calculated to help us to discover the good way than an assured return to the old path. Surely to see a divine thing when first it has reached the hands of man, is an intelligence fraught with the deepest interest and delight. The greater the rubbish, the more arduous the labour of Nehemiah to find the original foundation of the wall. The larger the branches of the mustard tree, and the more it has developed contrary to its original nature, the more the faithful soul will seek to ascertain its beginning. Just as the one who is true in heart will labour to reach the three measures of meal as they were at the beginning before they were leavened.

In John's epistles the word beginning is used ten times, with reference to three

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subjects: the Lord Himself, the grace to us, and the devil. It is not the question how those subjects were spoken of and held in John's time; very likely as the ruin had come in, they were very much defaced and warped from their original beauty. John does not speak of how they were accepted then, but of how they were in the beginning.

Nothing has done more mischief than the attempt of many, with the best intention, to accommodate truth to the present state of things, as we often hear it said, "We admit we do not adhere to the original order, but we must consider for the altered state of things;" as if God could allow any divergence from His own order. There may be weakness and little faith to reach the divine idea at the beginning, but the more truly we are in the Spirit, the more surely we shall refuse everything that is not of that order, though the demand might cause many a dear brother to separate from us. Our only answer to such an one, and it will affect his conscience some day, will be, we must

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stand for the truth as it came from God. Many might have argued convincingly for a cart to carry the ark in the days of David, but David had to learn as every true man learns sooner or later, that God never departs from His own order, and the more implicitly we adhere to it, the more openly He will support us.

Now I submit that whenever anything is first introduced as recorded in scripture, even though there may be development afterwards, yet that in the first announcement or beginning, the great characteristic features of it were defined. Take sin in the garden of Eden; the woman wilfully despising the word of God that she might gratify her selfish desires; and such is sin everywhere. Take the first mention of Babel, surely we get there its characteristic features. It has been so often pointed out, the beautiful and perfect way in which God consigned everything, one thing after another, into the hands of man, and that almost immediately man spoiled it; but with this I have not to do so much, as with the necessity for

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the man of God at every period to revert to what God had set up at the beginning, and not to take thought how he could amend it in its present disorganised state. The great work [of the prophets was to recall Israel to the beginning from which they had departed, and their recovery was marked by this, that they should sing as in the days of their youth, and as the days in which they came up out of the land of Egypt. What is the plain object and meaning of the apostle in referring us to the holy scriptures in 2 Timothy, but that we might learn how things came from God at the beginning? The church had so failed as the repository of God's counsels, that obviously you could not look to it for guidance, but to the word and teaching whereby it was first known. Take any truth, from grace to a sinner up to the day of Christ, and it will be found that while the names are retained in theological books, the mind of God is entirely missed. Of course in the limits of this paper I could not seriatim prove what I assert, but any one can test my

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assertion by ascertaining the theological idea of eternal life, or of worship, or of church.

If I want a clear, full idea of grace, I see it when it first came out with respect to the thief on the cross, under the penalty of a broken law, and when there was no other prospect before him but the terrible and eternal doom of a transgressor. The Saviour is seen alongside, the Just for the unjust to bring us to God; and in answer to his prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," he was conducted by Christ's word into the prospect of being that day with Him in paradise—a divine contrast indeed to the misery of the place and position in which grace had reached him.

Where do we get the most comprehensive idea of the new structure now in the course of building by Christ, but in Matthew xvi., where its beginning was announced? So also it is in Acts ii., when the Holy Ghost first came down, that we get distinctively His position here, filling all the house where

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they were sitting, and filling each of the congregation individually.

Finally, in this day of weakness and confusion there is no place where I can learn the true way of saints meeting together as I can by reverting to the beginning—to the first time that the disciples were gathered together after His resurrection. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." (John xx. 19.) Here it began. There they were infants as to knowledge and power, but they had begun ; Jesus stood in the midst. This was the main point that the crucified One had returned, and had assumed His own true place in the midst of His gathered people. He had previously promised them that at any time when two or three should be gathered together to His name, He would be there in the midst of them. (See Matt. xviii. 20.) Consequently we find that here,

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as related, He comes, pronounces peace, the result of His accomplished work, and shews them His hands and His side. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

There is a wondrous simplicity and blessedness in this beginning, this infancy. They then heard of peace for the first time. They were now breathed on. They now for the first time tasted of eternal life, which the Holy Spirit maintains. It was a great beginning, and no company of saints, however infantine as to knowledge or power, but may take courage and return to this beginning; gathered together, however feebly, with but one desire on their hearts, and that is, His presence. Oh, may each of us, however feeble as to our state, have simple faith to go back to the beginning; learning to get there by the three consecutive steps of the two disciples going to Emmaus: 1st, Christ learned in the scriptures; 2ndly, Christ known in resurrection; and 3rdly, the place where Christ comes into the midst of them, as at the beginning.

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It is most interesting and helpful to contemplate how this was reached, and the state of the disciples at the beginning after Christ's resurrection. They were personally attached to Him. They had received Him—they were born of God—but as yet they knew not the scriptures, and that He must rise from the dead. Many are, as to state, in the like ignorance in the present day; but this company was intensely bound to Him, and we can conceive the eagerness and effect with which they listened to Mary Magdalene as she delivered her message, freshly from the Lord's lips, that they were His brethren, and that His Father was their Father, and His God their God, a relationship and association hitherto unknown. Surely many of the hundred and twenty pondered over this blessed marvellous communication; but to this was added another, as if the Lord, by two distinct channels, would prepare His gathered people for His coming into their midst. The two disciples from Emmaus were enlightening them in another way, tell-

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ing them of how He was known to them in breaking of bread, and when these two testimonies had prepared their hearts for His presence, Jesus stood in the midst of them.

The more we take into account their state, and the effect of these two communications, the clearer we shall see the state which is really ready for the Lord's presence. They know little, but they loved much, and their hearts' one desire was gratified when Jesus stood in the midst. Thus it was at the beginning; and thus in the feeblest and most ignorant state now, we can be as they were if we have Christ the one absorbing object before our hearts. He came into their midst before they were, I might say, intelligent as to any of the truths of the church. A simple longing of heart for Him at the first was an invitation which He must accept, and surely it will be so to the very end. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

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Most assuredly the Lord is not unmindful of the errant and indifferent of His own; but at the same time He honours those who honour Him; and as in the time of the Judges ending with Samuel, He empowers even one faithful man to effect rescue and deliverance for all the Israel of God, if they will avail themselves of it; so is it now. I mean that though the Lord cares for every weak and failing one, yet that He loves the true disciple, and makes him His friend, in order that the truth of the gospel might be rescued from the corruptions which have darkened it, and that the name of Christ may be better acknowledged in the scene of His rejection. Nothing is dearer to the loyal heart than allegiance to Him, and any revival that is genuine cannot fall short of this testimony, and, in a day of failure like this, it cannot be obtained but with the exposure of every hindering element, in proportion to the faithfulness of the energy. Then the true are declared; hinderers detached, on the principle, "there must be also heresies among you,

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that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. xi. 19.) The watchword and assurance for every man of faith and courage in this day, is the same as in another day, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

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I CONNECT Matthew iii. 16, 17, and John xv. 26, in that we see the Trinity in their respective places in the divine dealings in grace in both. Heaven is opened to Christ, when He takes His place among the Remnant as man wrought on by God. The Holy Ghost descends on Him as Man. He is sealed and anointed, and the Father's voice owns Him Son, in whom He is well pleased. There He stood alone. But Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are all revealed ; each in their respective place. But He on whom the Holy Ghost descended and abode, was to baptise

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with the Holy Ghost. Thus we get a new order in this economy of grace. In Matthew the Son is below as Man to form man's place in His own Person; not only being Son, but the Father revealed as owning Him as such, as Man down here; and Man in His Person; sealed and anointed Man, with the heavens opened to Him down here, owned of, and connected with them.

In John xv. the Holy Ghost comes down, sent by the glorified Man in heaven to dwell in those who believe;—sent by Him who has all power in heaven and earth, to reveal the whole truth of that glory, and where it puts man in Christ, and out of the world, and the Head of the new order, and place of man as the fruit of redemption. The Holy Ghost is sent by the glorified Man, the Son. He is the glorified Man, and the Head of economical authority. But He sends Him from the Father. It is not a kind of independent thing; though now the glorified Man, the Father, as ever in John, has His own blessed place. The Holy Ghost is sent

THE NEW ORDER.

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by Christ,—a wonderful place for man. The Holy Ghost takes up, so to speak, the service part, but from the Father; He comes or goes forth from the Father. So connecting us with Him, He testifies of Christ in this place; but we are in immediate association with the Father. He not only is sent *παρὰ τοῦ π.*, but *ἐκπορεύεται π.*; that is, besides the economical authority of Christ, we have immediate fellowship with the Father, through the Holy Ghost as come from Him. Sending from the Father is Christ's place, a wonderful place, but His going forth from the Father is connected with the Father Himself. It is the glorified Christ, and He is the truth. So the Spirit so coming is the Spirit of truth, and is even said to be the truth. Men, though informed by the Holy Ghost, were the personal witnesses of what Christ was down here, a human picture though divinely given; but the Holy Ghost Himself carries on the service of revealing Christ in glory, as so sent by Him to make Him known; but then this also

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puts us in immediate relationship with the Father. With this we must connect John i. 33, Acts ii. 3 and John vii. 39.

X. Y. Z.

OUR MISSION.

SENT from above, Himself our life and glory,
Here as His witnesses—our path His cross ;
Light be our tread, and pilgrim-told our story,
How for Him now, we count all else but loss.

Fill'd with the brightness of Himself in
 heaven,
Strangers on earth, and portionless below,
Cheer'd by His love, not orphans, or forsaken ;
Borne in His heart, the road we onward go.

Friends of the Christ, our earnest expectation
Here to hold fast and magnify His name,
In this poor scene of woe and degradation,
Rising superior to our former shame.

Little in strength and weak our best endeavour,
E'en to maintain His word and name and cross.
This, be our joy, 'mid sorrow, trial, pressure ;
Waiting in patience for His well-known voice.

W. T. T.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter vii.

LET us now go back to the Lord's teaching and position with regard to the people, from whom He was already separated, in a certain sense, by refusing to go up to the feast, although He continued to teach them in grace.

Some details of the Lord's teaching mark out clearly His position, before He spoke of the promise of the Holy Ghost, and after the discussion took place about the wish to kill Him, when they made the remark that they knew not whence the Christ would come. Jesus formally declares that they knew whence He came, but that they did not know the Father who had sent Him. (Ver. 28.) What a terrible accusation! The proof was there in their conscience: they would not have wished to get rid of Him, as they were doing, if they had not had the inward consciousness that He came from God. The proofs were there: the witness was in their

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to Israel displayed itself ; the poor of the flock, claiming for Jerusalem and for themselves the glory of all that God had given, they affirm that no prophet had arisen out of Galilee. (Ver. 52.) This fact was false. And then again, how had they treated the prophets, of whatever country they might have been ? Where was the city who had slain the prophets, and was going to slay Him of whom all the prophets had spoken ? Irritated at their own powerlessness, being able to do nothing to hinder the testimony of Jesus, they disperse, and every one goes to his own house. Jesus' hour was not yet come.

SATISFIED.

THERE are few things more eminently desirable for a saint of God than the being able to say, I am satisfied. It is the gist of the psalmist's word, " My cup runneth over." Yet how few in this day of Christianity are abreast with the psalmist in this ; how few are they who

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thoughtfully and thankfully sum up their present portion as believers in this one word, "Satisfied." But, do we reflect upon the dishonour we do to Him who bought us with a price, when we exhibit the contrary, imputing to Him as we tacitly do that He has failed in that which He counselled concerning us? For may we not conclude that this was distinctly implied in that which He undertook? Nor was it a trivial or unworthy task. We may put the proposition thus; I will take a poor, restless, wayward thing, wilful and fitful, repining, disquieted and discontented, (which are distinct marks of man's fallen nature,) and I will make him *satisfied*! And this, not by changing his character, improving his circumstances, gratifying his desires or pandering to his foibles, but by imparting an altogether new life, introducing altogether new tastes, and opening an altogether new field of occupation and enjoyment. And the same shall constitute a fitting and adequate expression now, as well as an eternal testimony,

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not only of God's ability to bless, but of His supreme delight in so blessing.

Now this He effects in a threefold way, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. First, by what He does for us ; second, by what He is to us ; and third, by what He makes us to be to Himself. It is a real discovery when a saint for the first time sees that His perfect love has done its very best for us. This is not the finding peace, but after peace is really known and enjoyed, there is a further discovery, (have we all made it yet ?) that that love which is perfect in itself—"so sweet, so full, so free"—that love which is so boundless and so changeless, that it can never be enhanced or diminished, "love that no tongue can teach, love that no thought can reach," has bestowed upon us first of all, all that love could give ! And not stopping there, it is really rendering to each of us a personal and incomparably devoted service, which having its foundation laid in the travail of His soul on Calvary, is being made good to us all along the way in this day of grace,

by His session at the right hand of God in brightest glory! With enraptured hearts we gaze upon Him there, invested with heaven's highest dignity, enthroned in majesty, and crowned with glory and honour! How can we accept that He has won these new glories for Himself and will regale His own heart by sharing them with His bride through eternity, and yet not recognise that by the very love that He bears us, He has made it a necessity to Himself that besides the one incomparable work that He wrought on the cross, He should render to us every personal service that His thoughtful, tender interest in us could suggest as we pass through these toilsome scenes and difficult times? Scenes and times, however, which constitute that suited *training ground* which lies between our first knowledge of His grace and the fruition of it in endless glory.

Is there a circumstance in our path, that is no circumstance to, and has no place before, Him? Is there an exercise of our hearts that does not

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equally, though in a pre-eminent way, move His own? And can it be that one member suffering all the members suffer, and one honoured all rejoice, and yet the Head be unaffected? On the contrary, as a Man in glory, head of His body the church, He could say, "Why persecutest thou me?" It told upon Him; it fell upon Him, and it does so still. And He is *touched* with the feeling of our infirmities. "He knows what sore temptations are, for He has felt the same." If I have a sorrow which He cannot share with me, and sympathise in, clearly I am at fault; it is an unholy sorrow! If He have a joy that I share not in, equally am I at fault; for said He not, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves"? Oh! to be more in positive, practical communion with Him as co-sharers, He with us and we with Him, for God has "called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ." And should we, alas, sin, we have, blessed be His name, the ever-prevailing advocacy of the *righteous One* with the Father for our

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restoration, as when we sin *not*, there is the abiding priesthood to maintain us before God, according to the measureless value of the *righteous work* which He sacrificially wrought once for all. Thus there are, (1) His work of the cross, dying unto sin and bearing our sins, (2) His present service in priesthood and advocacy, and, (3) His personal interest, as devoted as profound, in all that concerns His saints. He knows us by name, calls us by His voice, draws us by His love, participates in our sorrows, shares with us His joys, leads our praises and deigns to give us His company, lighting up our path with the sweet sunshine of a favour and affection which is better than life. In presence of such self-sacrificing, devoted, unselfish love, can I possibly say that I am not *satisfied* with what He does for me? Shall we not on the contrary lovingly and gleefully attest, with the finest of the wheat has He fed me, and with honey out of the rock has He satisfied me?

But this introduces the second branch

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of our subject, for who but He is the finest of the wheat, and who but He the honey out of the rock? He satisfies us by what He is to us Himself. But have we really accepted this? Do we allow that God has ability to find an object that shall fully fill our hearts for time and eternity? And is that object a competent one to satisfy every divine desire of the soul by its intrinsic and extrinsic excellence? How surpassingly marvellous, when we come to think of it, is the fact that God, whose profound satisfaction in the Son of His love we adoringly behold, has caused the same divine satisfaction to repeat itself in each devoted, loving heart that is tutored to find its joy and delight in Him. It is no little thing to hold habitually before our hearts a happy and established conviction that we have Him personally as ours. A husband may do many things, yea, all that love and generosity could suggest, for the relatives of his wife, but she only could say, he is mine! And did he expend all that he possessed on them, it would

not alter this patent fact nor change its character in the least. Whatever he did for them, were the service or sacrifice ever so great, could not in the remotest degree weaken or disturb her sole title to say, he is *mine*! This is our blessedness as to Him. He is *ours*. The world is indebted to Him for benefits it as much fails to recognise as to repay. Old Testament saints and saints millennial shall appreciate His grace and favour, and no less spread His glory and His fame. Heavenly intelligences, too, those angelic beings that never sinned, shall raise aloud the voice saying, "Worthy is the Lamb." But of all animated beings, none have the title which we have, to say, He is ours! It is the Bride's unique title *in the Bridegroom*. He loveth the Church, and has given Himself for it. If then He be thus personally and only ours, how calculated is this to draw out towards Himself those responsive affections to which such an endearing and intimate relationship by its very nature gives rise! Holy, elevated affections, as

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sacred as sweet, which so exalted and excellent an object would fain inspire in our hearts in an ever deepening degree to the exultation of His own. And what is this but the divine affection reproduced in us? The loving answer to that which moves His own heart to exercise itself by night and by day, in every loving, tender, thoughtful way; evincing unwearied consideration and solicitude for us in the vicissitudes of the daily path, and promising to itself an untold and crowning joy in sharing with us His own happiness for ever! Ah! did we but know Him in all the peerless excellence of His Person, the altogether lovely, should we not freely, fully own, He has indeed, most truly, satisfied us with Himself?

But there is a third way in which He satisfies us, namely, by what He makes us to be to His own heart. No earthly figure can express this. A man may take himself a wife from the gutter, or adopt a street-Arab as his child, first imparting physical cleansing, fitting attire, moral training, and liberal

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education, but he can never start at the point where God has started with us, for He begins in making us a *new creation*. Nor this alone, He gives us a new and divine relationship, constituting us sons of God, the very relationship of Christ to the Father. And further He unites us eternally, by giving us the Holy Ghost, to Christ Himself in glory. Thus we have new creation, divine relationship and eternal union, as the three-fold cord which binds us to the glorified Man on high. And how His heart here and there discloses the deep delight He has in what He has made us to be to Himself, and *how much He thinks of us*; His friends, His brethren, His body, His bride, the partner of His throne, and the sharer of His glories and His joys for all eternity! Is it not enough?

May every saint of God gratefully and joyfully own that He *has* satisfied our souls as with marrow and fatness, and therefore our mouths praise Him with joyful lips!

W. R.

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for this life has been communicated to us; the new man is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth, and there is also the renewing into knowledge, according to Him who created him. But it was the word of life, and it was necessary to receiving that word; and here, in the passage before us, the light struggling against darkness, all depends, as we shall see, on the person of him who is speaking.

JOY IN SORROW.

ASSEMBLED at the Lord's table to shew His death, we meet to take part in a service designed to be eucharistic in character. The Lord, in instituting the supper, gave thanks, and that was all; thus teaching us in what light He viewed the results of His death for God and for His people, and, by consequence, in what light we should view them likewise.

The service was new and peculiar. It was new, for it had respect to His death; an event then still future. It

was peculiar, for nothing in the Mosaic ritual could be cited as a parallel to it, though in common with the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, it spoke of redemption. At the Red Sea it was redemption by power. At the Table we remember redemption by blood. And in that upper room, for the first and only time, both of these interventions of God in goodness were brought before the disciples: the former of them, as they partook of the feast in the land of Israel's inheritance; the latter, as they partook of the supper then just instituted, in reference to that which would so soon be an accomplished fact.

But in what sorrow were they as they reclined around that table. The Lord knew it, and told them He knew it. "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." (John xvi. 6.) Never before had they been called to keep that feast in circumstances so adverse to the outflow of joy. Thinking of their immediate future they might well be sad, for they were about to suffer bereavement through the death

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of the Lord, a bereavement, a sorrow, such as we have never known, nor can ever know. Now it was at such a time, and in such sorrowful circumstances, that "when they had sung an hymn they went out unto the mount of Olives." It is the evangelists Matthew and Mark who tell us of it. (Matt. xxvi. 30; Mark xiv. 26.) Those two, in whose writings we have the darkest pictures of the cross and its surroundings, are just the two who have recorded this instructive fact. Doubtless the Master raised the note of praise. Who else could have been free in spirit then to do it? But they all joined in it, all of them in the midst of their sorrow sang praises to God.

How incongruous some might have thought, and might have quoted the words of the Preacher, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart." (Prov. xxv. 20.) On ordinary occasions this would be true. But the Master could make no mistake. Clearly it was right,

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it was fitting that they should thus sing to God. But why? They were celebrating redemption by power, accomplished of old by the arm of Jehovah. The joy and thanksgiving in remembrance of that was for the time to override all personal and present sorrow.

The Lord knew they were sorrowful. He did not condemn it. He did not rebuke it. But He taught them, and surely would teach us, that when engaged in the remembrance of redemption, the joy of that is to override personal sorrow. It was so with them. How truly they loved Him, Thomas has taught us (John xi. 16), yet they sang, not the Lord only, but all of them together. So surely, when at the Lord's Table, it is for us to remember what they did, and like them to learn from our common Lord and Master in what spirit we should remember and celebrate that most wonderful intervention of God in grace—redemption by blood.

On another occasion, six weeks later, we see the same company once more in circumstances naturally calculated to

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distress them. Their sorrow, consequent on the Lord's death, had been turned into joy, when they had Him again in their midst as the Risen One. Then having accompanied Him to the mount of Olives, they had seen Him ascend heavenwards, and they were returning to Jerusalem without Him. Surely some might have thought that was the moment for weeping and depression. Not so with them. "They returned to Jerusalem," Luke tells us, "with great joy." (xxiv. 52.) Now at that moment they were without the Lord in person on earth, and without the abiding presence of the Spirit, for He had not yet come. Again are they found in circumstances in which no Christian can ever be here below—yet they rejoiced. Why this seeming incongruity? It was not the laughter of fools, but the joy of earnest, thoughtful, sober men. What could have made them rejoice at such a moment? Was it not the words of the men from heaven who assured them of the Lord's certain return?

At His death they had lost all hope.

On the occasion of His ascension they could re-enter the city, animated with the hope of His certain return. The remembrance then of redemption, and the hope of the Lord's return did act we see in this way on them. It is surely to be the same now. We never can be in the circumstances in which they were. A dying Christ we can never know. We cannot, like them, be deprived of His presence, nor can we know this earth without the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church of God. If they then were to sing, and could rejoice on these two occasions, no sorrow that we can know, it is plain, should stifle the strain of worship, due from us to God, as we sit around the Lord's table, where we look back to the past, and look onward to the future, the retrospect and the prospect alike demanding a note of praise.

“ABUNDANTLY SATISFIED.”

It is a cheering thought, and no less animating than it is happy, that, richly as we are blest as saints of God, He has

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not exhausted His measureless ability for blessing us. And His profound delight in blessing us, being commensurate with His resources, no more can the former be impaired than the latter diminished. The present scene and character of blessing can never be reproduced, it is true, but the unexplored fields of blessing that lie before us are as ample as their fertility is everlasting. If He have endowed us with the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in the mystery enriched us with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet He reserves to Himself infinitudes of fresh blessing for us when He receives us to His own rest. Nor does anything so conduce to give us a true apprehension (be it but a feeble one) of the supreme joys that await us, as the heart's bathing itself in its present blessedness. For every bit of appreciation by the Holy Ghost of our portion in and with Christ now, enlarges our capacity for apprehending by faith that to which He loves to conduct us in spirit—the terminal blessedness in His own presence.

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If we look at the closing verses of the Lord's utterance in John xvii., we find how He by the Holy Ghost, on the night of His betrayal endowed His saints with a dowry, the which we, by the Holy Ghost, should now in spirit be enjoying, seeing how solid is our title to it in His own word. (1.) There is *the glory* given Him by the Father which He shares with us, (Ver. 22.) (2.) The Father's *love* equally shared with us. (Ver. 23.) (3.) He further shares with us His own *place* in the Father's presence. (Ver. 24.) And, lastly, the Father's *name*; He shares, as it were, that also with us. (Ver. 25.) Thus His inheritance from the Father is here rehearsed, and title thereto granted to His saints. The guerdon from His Father of His faultless work and faithful testimony on earth, won by toils and tears and terrors, in anguish and in blood, He solaced His own heart in its hour of untold sorrow by sharing with the men whom that Father had given Him out of the world! The Father's they were and of the

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Father had they been given to Him, and how could He mark His appreciation of this primary gift more definitely than by sharing with them all else that the Father had given Him? Thus the quenchless love of Christ to the saints is the suited answer of His heart to the Father's expressed delight in Him.

But scripture supplies other features of our blessing. These I take to be :

1. The being in His presence at home ;
2. The bearing His likeness in glory ;
3. The partaking of the fatness of His house and of the river of His pleasures ;
4. The speaking of His goodness and singing of His righteousness ;
5. The beholding His glorification.

We read, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Now how-true-soever these words were of Christ to Jehovah, they are for His saints also, and it is Himself who openeth this path of life ; really by putting forth, as He will ere long, the power of His resurrection to them who in the meantime are privileged to know

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it by faith. And to nothing short of the goal itself—His own presence—doth this path conduct and His power uplift. There is fulness of joy, but nowhere save in the pavilion of His presence. And in that peculiarly blessed but yet measured way in which we apprehend His presence as it is vouchsafed to us when, and only when, we are gathered to His name, is any antepast experienced, or true foretaste enjoyed, of the blessedness for which our hearts are panting. Oh ! how enjoyable must be the atmosphere which His presence fills in unclouded glory. In that supreme moment shall we taste as never yet we have, that of which the Holy Ghost speaks as the *fulness* of joy ! And His right hand, too, is our place of honour. He loves to invest us with a dignity befitting Himself when He has us at His side, and He installs us there that we may be regaled in His banqueting house under the banner of His love !

Again in the next Psalm we read, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when

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I awake, with thy likeness." No less distinctly here, also, is it that which pertains to Him which enriches us. "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness, when I awake." Concerning Lazarus we read "the beggar died;" he awoke in Abraham's bosom! But for us the contrast is greater. The body of our humiliation, this groaning tabernacle is to be changed in a moment and fashioned by His hand into the body of His glory, and with this—His likeness—shall we be satisfied. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," said Job, and the corollary of this is, "in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another." The psalmist says, "I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." The apostle John says, "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." Each adds something to the other. Job's language is singularly literal—in *my flesh* shall I see, &c.; whom I shall *see for myself* and *mine*

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eyes shall behold. The psalmist is more doctrinal; he adds the *righteousness* in which he would behold Jehovah, and the *satisfaction* in which he would awake to the discovery that he bore His likeness. The apostle is more personal and his confidence is emphatic, “ *We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is* ”—the Man in the glory of God !

In Psalm xxxvi.—“ They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life ; in thy light shall we see light.” How the future portion shines in pre-eminent beauty and lustre here ! Satisfied “ with the *fatness of thy house.*” He will make us to *sit down* to meat and will come forth and serve us. No hasty meal to renew exhausted powers ; and no imperfect serving therewith ; but while seated at home in His presence and bearing His likeness, He will Himself come forth in new and wondrous service, not then ministering to our need as

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now, but to our endless joy. And we, his honoured guests, shall be partaking of the fatness of the Father's house; and not then sipping of the brook by the way, but drinking deep draughts of the ever-flowing river of His delight. Who could fail to be "abundantly" satisfied who partakes of the fatness of His house and drinks of the river of His pleasures? The fountain of life is with Him, and He will make us to drink of its river; and in His light shall we see light. Then shall the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ require no modifying medium; we shall gaze upon the displayed glory and resplendency of the Shekinah, and shall thus for all eternity rest in His rest and see light in His light!

Again in Psalm cxlv. we read, "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." I may be told this is earthly blessedness in the millennium, the praises of Israel when she is made glorious in Emmanuel's land. But the *principle* is there, and in that day, "I

“ ABUNDANTLY SATISFIED.” 179

will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.” (Hosea ii. 21, 22.) And of how many notes soever the harmony is composed, of the character of the praise there can be no doubt —“they shall abundantly utter the memory” (how lovely is that word) “of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.” What a glorious Recitative will that be when every voice “throughout creation’s vault” is attuned to an unfaltering melody—the earthly saints declaring “the glorious honour of his majesty” and we praising, in our own pre-eminent way, “the glory of his grace”! The heavenly and the earthly families like teeming vessels the overflow of which in joyous worship and untiring praise shall flow on and on for ever; and each tongue discoursing of the great goodness of the Lord. It shall constitute the true “Experience meeting” of the redeemed, when the memory of all His faultless, beauteous ways with us

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on earth will come under review in the light of eternity, and we shall recount the exploits of His wisdom and His love, in the scene of "his riches in glory."

I only add that in John xvii. there is one verse which appears to set forth in a superbly surpassing way the crowning joy of the saints. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am : that they *may behold my glory*, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Wonderfully blessed as it is for us to share the glory of Christ, how much greater a thing as to its moral qualities is here ! For it is no question of participation, but the perfectly (I say not disinterested, but) unselfish joy of beholding the glorification of Christ. It is that great sight which is to eclipse every other from everlasting to everlasting. And the principle upon which this shall constitute the culmination of all our joys is seen in John xiv. 28. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." His heart

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counts upon this, that our affection for Him is such that heaven's highest delight for us will be the supreme sight of His glorification—that of the Man who is Jehovah's fellow, God over all, blessed for evermore ! Not until then will He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Not until then will Jehovah rest in His love.

“ But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell,
Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell ?

God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.”

W. R.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

WHO IS A DISSENTER, OR A
DIVISIONIST ?

IN order to be able to determine who is a dissenter it is necessary first to know what the right thing is from which he dissents or has departed.

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being led by the Spirit of God in the path which is pleasing to Him.

May the Lord preserve us from dissent and keep us true to Himself according to the beginning.

ALONE WITH JESUS.

ALONE with Jesus ! Can it be
That He will deign to stay with me
Alone !

That He Himself with me will walk,
And suffer me with Him to talk
Alone !

No multitude hosannas cry,
No eager crowd, but only I
Alone—

Drawn by Thy wondrous matchless grace
Desire to gaze upon Thy face
Alone !

One day I shall Thy glory see,
But in that day Thou wilt not be
Alone ;

Only I know these eyes of mine,
Will see no other face but Thine
Alone !

Till then I would more often be,
My Lord and Saviour, still with Thee
Alone !

To hear Thy voice, to learn Thy ways,
And live henceforth Thy name to praise
Alone !

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter viii. 13-36.

THE question is put in verse 13 : "Thou bearest witness concerning thyself ; thy witness is not true." Now they might have spoken in this way if it had been a question of a man who bore witness concerning himself ; but if God speaks, that which He says is necessarily the truth, and reveals Him. One question only arises : Do men know Him, and is the soul capable of receiving the truth itself ? These two things go together, as we shall see. Jesus had come from heaven, from the Father ; He was going back there, and knew it. We have here the lowest point of His testimony in this world ; He is forced, by the opposition He meets, to go to the furthest point, and to say : "I am." He speaks here as man in this world, but having at the same time the consciousness of the place whence He had come. (Compare chap. iii. 11-13, 33, 34.) His words were

“BE NOT THOU THEREFORE
ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY
OF OUR LORD.”

2 TIMOTHY i. 8.

It will hardly be called in question, that all the special instruction and admonitions with which 2 Timothy abounds, are of the first importance for those whose lot is cast in the very times here prophetically depicted ; and it will not be, I judge, denied, that anything could be more important for the saints of God and servants of the Lord than rightly to understand the nature of the communications which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to give in this epistle for the guidance and comfort of the sheep of Christ amid the manifold and increasing difficulties of the path of faith, especially as it nears the end of the journey. The solemn injunction of the apostle to his son Timothy which heads this paper, claims therefore a prayerful consideration from all those whose hearts are set upon maintaining in divine order and

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energy that which is the subject of the present activity of God the Holy Ghost on earth. With regard to the expression, “The testimony of our Lord,” it seems to be the same great truth as is conveyed by the words “My gospel,” “Our gospel,” “The mystery of Christ”—expressions peculiar to Paul and his writings; to speak therefore of “the testimony we hold”—carefully excluding from it all that the Holy Ghost is on earth to maintain by divine power, as God’s present thoughts and purposes, in face of a hostile world and failing church, is to fail grievously in discernment of God’s mind for this hour, and practically to drop to the level of sect and self. There are two great parts or divisions in “the testimony of our Lord.”

1st. That wherein it relates to us as individuals, or its individual aspect.

2nd. Its corporate aspect.

But I would say that in thus dividing as it were the subject, I do not mean to imply that in scripture it is not looked at as one great whole, so that

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“the testimony of our Lord” takes in all.

Now that which I have called the first head or part of the great subject, begins with the stupendous fact that the cross has ended for ever the history of the first man before God; the trial of man was closed there; all God's previous dealings and dispensations allowed his existence and placed him under trial. There is but one man now before God, the Risen One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Man, the last Adam. The importance of this great *fact* will be appreciated by every true heart; it contains in it the secret of our present position and power individually, for we are in Christ before God—in the second Adam, and not at all in the first. Further, Christ is in us, if we are in Christ. It secures also the disallowance *practically* of the first man, as having been set aside for ever in judgment upon the cross; so that if man in the flesh were allowed any place now, not only would there be a denial practically of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

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but there would also be a surrender of the true place of a Christian, and further there would be a manifest *incapacity* to maintain “the testimony of our Lord” as flowing from this. Another great fact is made evident: namely, that “the head of every *man* is Christ”—not the head of every believer, but the head of every *man*; in this is asserted His right, He has acquired the right over every child of Adam, in virtue of it, He will give to every man *life* or *judgment*; true, His claims are still denied and disowned, yet faith delights to own them all the more, and that to the remotest circle. I have said enough on this head to *suggest*, which has been my great thought in approaching so vast a subject; indeed it were difficult to do much more within the ordinary limits of a paper such as this was purposed to be.

Now as to the second part of this great testimony, that of which the former part is the great foundation as it were, it were not too much to say that it is the special testimony, which the

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Holy Ghost is maintaining at this moment. What is it ?

What is "the testimony of our Lord"? Surely it is that the last Adam, the second Man, exalted and glorified is the head of His body the church; that while He is bodily in heaven, His body the church is on earth. Surely nothing could be more blessed than to see that in the scene where Satan as its Prince led on the whole world to crucify Christ, there, amid all its hate and fury, God purposed to have Christ's body, and the Holy Ghost has come down from the exalted and glorified Christ, so that "by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." It is against this truth the whole power of Satan is aimed at this moment; it was so from the first, mark the titles which suffering put upon him who was in a special sense its apostle and minister: "the prisoner of the Lord," "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," "Be not thou therefore

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ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me *his prisoner*," "An ambassador in bonds." It was verily from the outset a suffering testimony, it was founded on suffering, propounded in suffering, maintained in suffering. Its very nature crosses in a special and peculiar way all the thoughts of man, its maintenance is apart from and independent of every creature or earthly help and stay.

This testimony is heavenly in every aspect of it; in its nature, position, destiny it is so, and hence no doubt the danger of being ashamed of it; for what could so fully expose to contempt and scorn than for a man in his own person and ways to be an exponent and expression of "the testimony of our Lord;" to be so, one must be *a man from heaven*.

I will quote the words from another, as expressing in a way that I could not, the blessedness of the wonderful testimony. ". . . it is not the ordered system of things, linked with the earth or with flesh and blood as was the

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former thing in Israel. The call of the church is apart from the world to do service in the light and strength of the Holy Ghost and to maintain in living spiritual grace testimony to a rejected and heavenly Jesus. All interest within us and around us is contrary to this, such a call can be upheld, such a dispensation maintained only in the direct grace of the Spirit, ministered to elect vessels and filling them with the freshness and apprehension of truth. No ordered services or course of fleshly ordinances can at all answer to this end, no transmitted or cessational office can at all fill out and discharge its duties, no such authority is owned by it. In man there is ever a tendency to the mere ways of nature, and the course of this world; and in order to sustain a thing spiritual, and living like the church, the natural way, yea, necessary way (save that God is sovereign), is by a fresh putting forth of light and power, to revive it again and again, that there may be still a testimony to the power of God, and to the ways and services of

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a living house, so that the coal may not be quenched.”

I would say as earnestly, as I am able, that to maintain this testimony in divine order and power, should be the one great purpose of the saint and servant. Satan most opposes that upon which God's mind is most set, and hence here is the scene at this moment, of the fiercest battle ; many and various are his plans and wiles to defeat and counteract the work of the Spirit of God ; imitation (see 2 Tim. iii. 8) being his mode of warfare, quite as much if not more than open opposition ; hence we have this great truth reduced to a *theory* with some, to a *mere doctrine* with others ; while we fear with a very large number, the benefit of man and his blessing, has a nearer interest than maintaining “the testimony of our Lord.” The importance of it cannot be exaggerated, it overrides every service and work. If we are not here for this, we are not here for Christ, in the true sense of being here for Him. There are two specious wiles of the enemy, aimed at the setting aside

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of this great present purpose of God, to which I would call attention. The first is seen most triumphant just now in Christendom. Amid the unwearied labour and evangelical effort of this closing hour in which we live, nothing is more apparent than that the double character of Paul's ministry (see Col. i. 23, 24) is virtually and practically ignored; and whilst there is much true, vital, earnest desire to spread the good news, it is painfully evident that it is the gospel without the church. The second snare is seen, in a far more limited sphere than the first, but alas it is a wile, and to which many true and earnest souls have fallen a prey; it is the denying of all corporate testimony of every kind—the heart dwelling on the failure and ruin, in which the whole professing body (or house of God on earth) is involved; or else engrossed with it in that remnant which God has graciously borne with, *and not left*, amid all its waywardness and weakness, it soon loses faith in God, and easily becomes the unconscious tool of Satan, even to

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propagate his slur on the Father's care for the glory of His Son ; as if He will not to the end maintain, though in remnant character and testimony, an expression practically of Christ's body on the earth. One word further, and I have finished: it is only in divine power the testimony can be maintained—the Spirit of God alone therefore is this power ; moreover each saint and servant must be in person the expression of “the testimony of our Lord.” It was said to Paul, “rise and stand on thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee *a minister*, and *a witness*, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee”—and he could point Timothy afterwards to his “manner of life,” as well as to “my doctrine,” as proof of how that ministry and witness had been fulfilled. How important then to hold fast all that is set forth by the expressions, “my doctrine,” “manner of life”—it is not laborious service, and mere good conduct. Such there might be, and no

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doubt they exist, and yet "the testimony of our Lord," neither understood nor maintained. May the Lord in His rich mercy give us to value beyond all else beside, communion with Him, and His beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ; may He impart to our hearts a deepening sense of the blessedness of being in the divine concert while we are here on earth, that amid storm and tempest, through good and evil report, we may not "be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner."

W. T. T.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL
RECOGNISE THEM.

In a day of profession it is an immense help that there is an unmistakable way by which we can discern between good and bad speaking. In the judgment of the Lord a speaker is either a good tree or a bad one. And in a day of profession as it was in Israel in the time of

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the Lord, He announces this unfailing test, that "by their fruits ye should recognise them." He had warned them that the false prophets would come in sheep's clothing, that their outside assumption was quite the opposite to what they were in heart. It would seem almost uncharitable to suppose that one was quite contrary to his profession, hence our blessed Lord gives us this test, "by their fruits shall ye recognise them." The fruit indicates the real nature of the tree. You cannot gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good, and the wicked man out of the wicked brings forth what is wicked." The moment a man speaks he declares himself. If there be wickedness in his utterances, the wickedness was in his heart before he gave utterance to it: just as the braying of the ass covered with the lion's skin betrayed him. Even in common things a great point is gained when a man declares himself, for the effort of the wicked to conceal his malice,

THE FATHER, AS PRESENTED BY PAUL AND BY JOHN.

IN Romans we have not the Father brought as such into view. Subjectively we are sons of God, the relationship with God is there established;—so heirs. But personally, the Father Himself is not brought before us. So in Galatians. This makes it important to make the difference between relationship and the revelation of the Person. In John we have seen the Father, our communion is with the Father. So, save the Galatians, it is always God *our* Father, there, God *the* Father. In Colossians we have, “giving thanks to the Father.” 2 Timothy is also as Galatians. The Person of Christ known on earth to John, now seen as He was by the Holy Ghost as Son, explains this. In Paul it was an effect in our state. In John it was a Person. (Compare i. 14–18, and xiv. 9.) Hence as heretofore seen, this name is always grace. I have long felt the difference between knowing God was my Father,

and knowing the Father. Of the latter I fear I know little. Still we do know Him. One is my state and relationship, and a blessed one; the other as knowing Him who is personally revealed in Christ. (See John i. 18.) This is all of immense moment. Our knowledge of the Father is simply in the revelation of Himself, and relationship as on His side. In the very few hymns addressed to the Father, it is the Pauline view of it, and therefore descends to our blessing in connection with it, and so entering into counsels. But our knowledge of the Father in John's communications is simply Himself,—a Person who stands in this relationship to us. That we are sons is our condition. The revelation of the Father is Himself. The Father Himself loves me. This I enjoy, but can hardly celebrate. It is necessarily what He is to me (to Christ of course, for that is the measure of it), but as known it is to me; but it is what He is in Himself, not my place. Hence John is entirely individual. It is not that we do not partake of it together, still it

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remains individual as children in a family, not the union of a body to the Head ; or even of a wife. I study Christ as come down here, seek to learn His ways, His personal perfectness, and what He was with others, what He was with God His Father. I speak of eating Him and so living by Him, because He has entered humanly, though perfectly, into all my circumstances. With the Father it is the simple sweetness of sovereign love in that relationship ; most sweet, but simply divine, and in that relationship. What a thing to have both ! Christ is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, was tempted like as we are, save sin ; it is sympathetic. Blessed to have Him enter into this scene, share our sorrow and suffering in it. The Father takes us quite out of it, resting in His divine blessedness. But the Lord's entering into it is equally divine, but experimental, so though we are in immediate relationship with the Father, it is through Christ we know Him, and only so.

J. N. D.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter viii.

OUTWARDLY, the Jews were indeed the children of Abraham; but the word of Christ had no place nor entry into their hearts, and they sought to slay Him. Here the contrast becomes formal: Jesus spoke (for it is always His word) that which He had seen in His Father's presence, being Himself the Son who revealed Him, and announced that which was heavenly and divine: but this brought out of their hearts the Satanic hatred of God which was in them. Here the two great principles of sin which characterise the adversary shew themselves in them;—that is, murder, and the absence of the truth. (Vers. 44, 45.) This opposition between the revelation of that which is from above and that which is in the world and from below gives its character to the chapter, and forms its basis. Their descent from Abraham is nothing more for the Lord than a circumstance

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The second character of the enemy thus was being manifested in them. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw, and rejoiced” (ver. 56); for Christ was expected according to the promises. The Jews, who only saw things according to the natural understanding, began to cry that He was mad: then, as He had declared of whom they were, the Lord now openly declares who He is Himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto you: before Abraham was, I am” (not *I was*). The Jews were speaking with God, and resisting His words: their hatred bursts forth, and they take up stones to stone Him.

Note here that Jesus gave eternal life by His word; He was the fulfilment of the promises; but again, He was God in this world. Life and the truth were on one side; murder and falsehood on the other. This is what makes this chapter so solemn. That which, grace excepted, was the whole life of Jesus in the midst of this people in this world,—the truth, the life, the sent One of

the Father, God manifested is flesh,—in the presence of hatred of the truth of God; all this is found concentrated in this chapter.

AN OPEN DOOR.

“I WILL give you an open door” is the Lord’s token to the faithful company. It is thus they are favoured. However large and varied His kindness and ministry to those in the churches running down to His coming, to Philadelphia only does He assure an open door. It is important to ascertain what an open door is, and having learned what it is, we then can determine who the faithful company are, for to them only is this mark of favour given. Very gracious of our blessed Lord to distinguish in this peculiar way those who maintain His name in this evil day. Faithfulness will be marked with success. “No man shall be able to stand before you.” “One man will chase a thousand.” It is not labouring to succeed which is not uncommon, but

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simple fidelity of heart to the Lord, and His word, which marks this faithful company, and obtains for them the distinction of "an open door."

An open door is a success, or a progress entirely of God. Many might contend that they had largely succeeded in propagating their opinions, and that their disciples were very numerous who could not assume that they had an open door as it is set forth in scripture. An open door is a success given by God, and as peculiar and unconnected with providence, as any miracle. The success of popular leaders in the church in every age has been derived from their own ability, so that the followers were simply disciples of a certain school. This is all traceable and to be ascribed to man's natural power, but though very influential and seducing, it is not the open door of scripture. It is the human counterfeit of the great reality. God effecting for me something that no arrangement of mine could procure, is an open door. Abram saw a ram in a thicket caught by the horns; that was

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an open door, that is, it was a special mark of divine favour, providing the faithful servant with the needed thing at the moment, but by no contrivance of his own. I may not be able to convey it, but it is in keeping with a blessing of another kind. "He prepareth a table for me, in the presence of my enemies," the difference being, that in the open door it is something to help me in my work, while the other is to comfort me in my labour. The Lord gave Eliezer in his mission for Rebekah an open door. The right person is the one he addresses, which he could not have secured by any act or means of his own. It was not by any foresight and personal skill he had reached the right person, but by the signal intervention of God, and thus a very marked favour to his faithful servant. I call Abimelech following Isaac (Gen. xxvi.) in order to make a covenant with him—an open door. Abimelech's reply to Isaac when he said to the king, "Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me?" clearly shews that his

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coming was of God. I desire to gather from scripture the true idea of an open door, and disabuse the minds of saints of the erroneous one now current, that when there is a readiness to hear, and a great concourse, there is an open door. Whereas if I understand scripture, there is an open door when there are many adversaries; and the more singularly it is God's doing, and apart from man's work, the more assuredly it is the door of His opening.

The peculiar characteristics of an open door as I gather are, that the Lord supports one by a provision of His own in His work, and that it is not the multitude of adherents who follow one that indicates this great favour, but the character of the support. One very devoted person, led by the Lord to co-operate with me, would be a greater evidence of His favour than many young converts. God using His word to enlighten souls, and enable them to make every sacrifice to follow the Lord, is the greatest manifestation of power in this day. I thankfully own His

mighty power in turning souls from darkness to light, but I fully believe, and daily see, that it requires an inconceivably greater action of His power to lead a soul into simple devotedness. The misery of an awakened soul in a way predisposes it for the light of grace, at least, its need demands that there should be acceptance of the grace that God shines in on the soul ; while nothing but the surpassing lustre of a glorified Saviour can enable a man to renounce the interests and attractions of the world for Christ's service here.

Joseph had an open door, both as a slave, and as a prisoner. God wrought for him, and all Egypt had to acknowledge him, and he was the true servant of his people. The door came, in spite of difficulties overwhelming, and at times apparently insurmountable, and it was opened the more distinctly as the opposition increased. With Joseph, the effort of the enemy, when he was a slave, was to corrupt him. Joseph's fear of God had gained for him the confidence of his master.

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Damage his integrity and he falls. Joseph was condemned, but a greater door was opened to him in prison, though not until long after his mere personal influence had worn off. After two years the befriended butler, who had forgotten him, remembers him, and the word of God obtains an open door for him. The conviction that God is here accompanies an open door. To David, very remarkably there was granted an open door; not only does the king's son declare for him, but he suffers on his account. And when in the cave of Adullam, not only his parents but the priest came to him, and afterwards the prophet, and eventually he could recount all the mighty men who had lent him their support. One must not think that because opposition increases, and one appears to be silenced and extinguished, that the open door has been recalled. Nay, very often when outwardly all hope has gone, then in the most distinct way the door will be opened. When David was at Ziklag he might have feared that all

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was gone, but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and he proved himself worthy of the throne in slaying the Amalekites—the very thing that Saul had failed to do. I need hardly add any more in the way of examples, but with the apostle Paul when Barnabas turned away from him, in the next verse we find Timothy given to him ; this describes an open door. When his hands were weakened by the defection of Barnabas, a very able man in the gospel was given to him ; just as at another time the jailer at Philippi, the once ready executioner of the world's enmity, is now his host and devoted supporter in the same place.

It is evident then from the examples I have adduced, that an open door is a special intervention of God on behalf of His faithful ones, and it is not simply with any necessary part of His work, such as conversion and the like, but a support to the faithful in the very point in which their faithfulness is called forth. It is to support the faithfulness and not the mere beginning of the work. When

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any work is of God the more it grows and advances, the more it will be proved to be of God ; and each step in advance is by a fresh energy of God's Spirit, and bearing a more distinct mark of His power, and it is with this advance that He vouchsafes an open door. When any one becomes satisfied with a part of His grace, and there is no pressing on ; then, while He does not withdraw what He has given, because it is His grace, yet He does not honour those who are not advancing ; and though the preaching of the gospel, schools, and other good works continue, yet there is no unfolding of His mind, nor will any very devoted person join them. Their service and goodness may be truly approved of, but there is no distinct support from God to them, either in the form of increased light, or additions of men of power and devotedness. We see from Psalm lxxxi. that a part of God's grace can be accepted, without there being a pressing on to the purpose of God for His people. If there had been, He would have subdued their

enemies. The haters of the Lord would have submitted themselves, and "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock, should I have satisfied thee." Here is the danger of Christians in this day, accepting part of the grace of God, and not pressing on to His desire for them. Now, I see that it is to those who are pressing on that He vouchsafes His support, both as to increased light, in the unfolding of His word, and co-operation in great devotedness from former opponents.

No part of God's work can be done without His power, but according as there is advance, the power is more opposed. It was more necessary for Israel to leave Egypt, than to enter Canaan. God's power brought them out, but they despised the pleasant land. The church is the antitype of Israel in the book of Joshua; we are brought in, and yet the mass dwell only on escape, and are not in any enjoyment of the pleasant land, which is heaven itself. It is to those who, like

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Samuel, seek to be free from every hindrance and maintain their calling, keeping His word, and not denying His name, for whom the Lord appears in a signal way, so that they are able to say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." I may be told of the number of conversions; the increase of scriptural schools, and of temperance; and these may be pointed to as the work of God. I do not deny that there is not a measure of divine work there, but I say that it is not to these that He gives the open door—His distinct support. It is to those who are in the front of the conflict insisting on being true to the beginning, though a mere remnant as to numbers, yet part of the original, holding the truths which characterised the church at the beginning; and the more and the better this is adhered to, the more signally will the Lord vouchsafe a support by more increased light, and calling out devoted servants. Wherever I do not find increasing light and more devotedness, more "mighty men," then I should say that though there may be

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sincerity, yet that they are not those who have Christ's special support. Surely when there is in any little measure this special support, an open door, every devoted heart will be attracted and led to share with those thus honoured of Him; and surely as He has promised us such a mark of His favour, it behoves us all so to walk in faithfulness and lowliness that we may be thus favoured.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

CAN WE MEET NOW ON THE GROUND
OF THE ONE BODY?

Is the body of Christ on the earth? is a question of the greatest interest to every true-hearted Christian. I suppose no one would deny the doctrine. That it is in some way on the earth is part of the christian creed. Romanism admits the doctrine by imitating it. The church in some form or other is held to be one whole, part of it militant and part triumphant. The idea

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and made sit together in heavenly places in Him, if the body be not here? How can Jews and Gentiles be one if there be not one body? "That he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. ii. 16.) What is the work of the Holy Ghost on this earth if there be no body? How are saints bound to one another if they be not baptised by one Spirit into one body? "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is the Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 11, 12.) "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." For what purpose are the gifts, if there be no body to edify? "And he gave some apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv.

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11, 12.) And lastly, how can the body edify itself which it is required to do if it be not in existence? "From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 16.)

Can anything more surely establish the inability of the human mind to comprehend a spiritual fact, than that a subject so distinctly and variously presented and insisted on in scripture, should by even zealous and devoted Christians be opposed and denied, while in simple faith apprehended by the youngest? The Lord anoint their eyes with eye-salve that they may see.

THE GROUND OF MINISTRY, AS
SEEN IN EPHESIANS IV.

THOUGH the general thought has been often noticed, yet the fulness of the statement as to the ground of ministry, and its consequent character, strikes me

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in Ephesians iv. First it is founded on leading Satan captive through the cross, and making those delivered the vessels of the Spirit, in the warfare with the enemy, who though he be wholly annulled as to his power for faith, holds it over the world, and exercises it as the trial whether faith is there. Mighty through God is the condition of that warfare, and the secret of it must be there to gain the victory. This is one part of the foundation of ministry, carrying on the warfare in the knowledge of Christ's victory; the secret we carry with us, though the gift of the Spirit, from the victorious Lord, be that by which we carry it on; as Joshua carried on the warfare with Amalek, but the power was elsewhere. Then we have a wider sphere, and that of simple, positive blessing. The taking up of the whole creature sphere, going below it and far above it by Christ, so as to fill all things; the lower parts of the earth and far above all heavens, so that faith finds Him filling all things in the efficacy of redemption, though He has

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not yet taken possession of it in power. Conflict goes on, but with a power which made the walls of Jericho fall down by the sound of a ram's horn, but with a responsibility which made Israel be beaten before Ai. Both with secret causes; but both the expressions of the springs of divine government. But here we have only the power of Christ carried out. Captivity (Satan) led captive, and all things filled with the efficacy of redemption. (Compare Acts ii. 33.) The desert is man tried; Canaan, the saint in his warfare as in the place of promise in title. We must add 2 Corinthians xii. as the subjective way of power.

J. N. D.

THE FATHER'S DELIGHT IN CHRIST AND OURS.

WE speak;—the word does, of communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and I have often taken the Father's delight in Christ and in His work, as an expression of this; for

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our delight, through grace, is there too. But there is a difference, not only in measure as is evident, but in its nature too, though it be divine and of God in us. God looks at Him in its own intrinsic perfectness. Perfect obedience, perfect love, no doubt of a man, but still divinely perfect, and that according to the abstract perfectness of His own nature. Hence it was abstract divine delight in what was divinely perfect, and that in the person of the Son of the Father, seeking His glory. We as partakers of the divine nature delight in this same blessed object; but we delight in it by obligation, by finding the precious food of a dependent soul, by the sense of His perfect love, known to us in our need, and in death, as redeeming us. It is not that we do not delight in the perfectness of our Saviour in Himself, and glorifying His Father, but we delight in Him as our Saviour. There is a link of personal association connected with our own joy and companionship—He the Firstborn among many brethren. J. N. D.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter viii. 32-59.

WE should also notice that we have here before us not a question of miracles, but entirely that of the word of Jesus. The Jews do not ask for a sign, as they often did; it is not the ordinary current of infidelity here; but the truth, the light, are in direct contrast with the darkness which does not understand them, but which at the same time is hindered in action by them; for the light shines even when it is not received. Light is not in man's heart, and this fact makes itself felt in the heart: they could impute nothing to the witness which could weaken the testimony; no one could convince the Lord of sin; they did not believe, because He told them the truth. Here, then we have the pure opposition of man's heart to the truth, because it is the truth. Light may reach the conscience, and if the will is not changed, this only produces hatred, as in the case of Stephen; but

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turn away the truth, and to justify themselves before their own consciences in rejecting it; but as soon as it was fully revealed, their murderous hatred shews itself in violence.

“THE JOY OF THE LORD IS
YOUR STRENGTH.”

THERE are two scenes in Nehemiah which bring before us in as interesting as instructive a way, the joy of the remnant. These are chapter viii. 8–12, and xii. 43. The first, it will be observed, is connected with the law of the Lord being restored to its true place, and the last with the sacrifices being again offered. Of no private interpretation are such scriptures, and they surely have a voice for us in this day. We have in principle, (1) the word of God recovering its true place before the *consciences* of the saints, and (2) the work and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ with all which that brings to their *hearts*.

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I. As to the first, we see that “all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.” The word of God, true to itself, had reached the consciences of the people, and the suited result is seen in their brokenness of spirit. They could not but be rebuked when they remembered how unmindful they had been of Jehovah’s covenant, “the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.” And, when they were made “to understand the reading,” they could not but be deeply humbled at the discovery that so much of what God had ordained (the feast of tabernacles and many another thing expressive of His goodness and mercy), both they and their fathers had despised. Having “despised the pleasant land” (compare Deut. xi. 8–12, Ps. cvi. 24), no wonder that the feast which reminded them of its contrast in the booth-life of the wilderness should also have been contemned. They wept, therefore, and fittingly, it was a sacred sorrow which well became them. Jehovah accepted it, and it gave Him for a brief

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moment to find His returning joy in them, and they must now enter into His joy, and must rejoice *with* Him. Thus it was to be a season of sacred joy born of a sacred sorrow.

The Tirshatha and the priest catch the spirit of the occasion, and interpret it to the people. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." (Jer. xv. 16.) That which in its first effect was distress to the conscience, and brokenness to the spirit, was to become richest pasture for the soul. Hence we read, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.) They are encouraged to a generous participation of the viands of Jehovah for the delight and satisfaction of their own souls, and then to an equally generous benefaction of them to those "that

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have nothing.” (Septuagint.) They are constituted Jehovah’s evangelists—out of the abundance of a well-fed and satisfied heart, the mouth is to speak, that His word may be the joy and rejoicing of every soul among the residue of His people. They are the Lord’s almoners to dispense of His goodness to the poor, the bounteous goodness of His heart, saying, as it were, “Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” (Cant. ii. 11–13.) “Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. The congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it.” (Ps. lxxviii. 9–11.) Beautiful suggestion of a later scene, when not only shall His word be magnified above all His name, but

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“everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord.”

This joy, Jehovah's own joy, was to be their strength. In other words their strength for testimony should be determined by their joy in Jehovah. The measure of the one should be the limit of the other. Is there not here a clearly defined principle, and does it not help us to discover why we are such sorry witnesses for Himself? The *joy of the Lord* has not been reached. We have not caught the spirit of the occasion. As in Haggai's day, their fathers, the returned captives, had been occupied with their own blessing while Jehovah's interests lay waste, so in Nehemiah's day, the children had to be lifted out of their own pre-occupation into the sunshine of Jehovah's delight. And on the same principle it is only by occupation with Christ that we learn, and we prove, that the spring of our joy is the source of our strength.

II. In the other scene (Neh. xii. 43) we read, “they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced.” Here the people are not

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seen as joyous *witnesses*, but as joyous *worshippers*. They gave thanks, they sang aloud, they rejoiced. Thus if I hurry the worship of saints that I may get space for the exercise of ministry, it is clear that however good a witness I may be, I am wanting as a worshipper. I fail in the superlative part of my vocation. We are called to be witnesses and to be worshippers, and together they constitute our vocation—Levites for service, and priests for worship. To exalt the former at the expense of the latter is subversive of God's order, for pre-eminently we are worshippers. All true worship is founded upon sacrifice. I do not speak of elect angels, but as to man after becoming a sinner. There is from him no worship but what is in recognised relation to a sacrifice already offered. An accepted sacrifice is an occasion of thanksgiving and a cause of joy, and joy is that condition of soul which fits for worship, and from which worship ascends. Divine joy in its very essence is a holy, a sacred thing, and is divinely ministered to the heart ;

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thus you could not, in the nature of things, have divine joy and be in a bad state of soul. Again, joy of heart begets worship in spirit ; and the more exalted the heart's appreciation of the sacrifice, and the more distinct the apprehension of being before Him, the more blessed are the joy and worship. Thus we read, they offered "*great sacrifices*," and consistently they rejoiced "*with great joy*."

Here then we are instructed as to the poverty of our worship as well as the feebleness of our testimony—the *great lack* is "*joy in the Holy Ghost*." (Rom. xiv. 17, 18.) Righteousness and peace there may be, to the approving of men, and rightly so ; but to adequately "*serve Christ*" in testimony, and to be "*acceptable to God*" in worship, there must be "*joy in the Holy Ghost*." That which is the power of testimony is no less the power of worship—the joy of the Lord is our strength. And indeed how beautiful is that word in Nehemiah xii. 43, "*So that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off*."

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Surely it was the very worship becoming a testimony, suggestive of the words of the prophet which Jehovah will yet fulfil, “Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people.” (Is. lxxv. 18, 19.) If we look back to the dedication of the temple (2 Chron. v. 13), we find that when the joy and worship culminated, the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God. He responded to the joy of His worshippers. If we look forward to millennial days, His own joy is beautifully predicted by Zephaniah, “He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” It is exquisite! And in the presence of such tokens of His joy and delight of heart in relation to the worship of His earthly people, tell us, ye who can, what must be the *present* joy and delight of the Father in the worship of *His children*, and of Christ in the midst of *His church*!

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How much did the Lord Himself dwell upon joy, both theirs and His, when with His disciples on earth ! And with the apostle Paul, great prophet of the church, it was a frequent theme. When addressing the elders of Ephesus, what he personally coveted for himself was that he should finish his course with joy. In Romans v. we joy in view of glory, joy in the way to it, joy in God Himself. In Philippians he again and again insists upon joy, and, albeit addressing them from his prison, he joys and rejoices with them all. In Galatians the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, &c. Love is of God, His very nature, and not a more beautiful bit of fruit could be found than "love in the Spirit." Joy takes the next place, "joy in the Holy Ghost." It is the heart's exultation in that to which the divine love has introduced it, and with which it has enraptured it !

But not to pursue this further, I only add that the basis of all testimony is *the word of God*, according to the immediate revelation of His mind,

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If I am not in the current of His present thoughts my subject-matter is wanting. But that being given, “joy in the Holy Ghost” is the spring and power of my testimony. In like manner the basis of all true worship is *the work and Person of Christ*; but given that, “joy in the Holy Ghost” is the spring and power of our worship.

Seeing these things, may the Holy Ghost be amongst us an ungrieved Spirit, and may the Lord in His grace who has given His saints an altar and built them a wall against their adversaries, revive His own work to His own glory, making us, notwithstanding the ruin and the sorrow, more joyous witnesses, and more joyous worshippers, for the joy of the Lord is our STRENGTH!

W. R.

“WHAT ISRAEL OUGHT TO DO.”

It is said of some of those who surrounded David at Hebron, that they “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.” Alas!

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it is to be feared that it is more than can be said of too many who *profess* to have come out in this day to the true David in his rejection.

In earlier days, even ere the land of promise was entered, we are told that it was the conduct of some of the spies that spread fear and discontent in Israel; they made the heart of the people melt by bringing up an evil report of the land they had searched (see Numbers xiii.; Joshua xiv.) and this is the very opposite of knowing what Israel ought to do.

Now it cannot be denied that while the truth of God is one great whole and that all and every portion of it is the property through grace of His children, and all needed too in its place, there have been certain parts of it to which at different times as special truth the Holy Ghost has been pleased to give prominence, either in recovering it after years of ignorance, superstition, and darkness, or else reviving its preciousness in the waning affections of His saints: this is so plain that to dispute it seems blindness indeed; more than

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that too may be urged in the remembrance of how the blessed God has ever connected the knowledge of His mind, the understanding of the thing that He does with loyalty of heart towards Himself. “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” shews very clearly that it was a special and peculiar line of action, and, “for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him,” shews very distinctly that faithfulness on Abraham’s part was the ground of the communication being made to him.

Now the importance of having a divine estimate of anything cannot be overrated, it is false and mischievous in the extreme to suppose that it is in any sense an experience. “The knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” is in order to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; and the practical result with the experience flow-

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ing from it, depends upon the saint being filled with the knowledge of God's will. The Lord has been graciously pleased in His sovereign goodness to raise up from time to time vessels of His own election to whom He communicated His mind, and through whom He spread it among His people. The last of such vessels in the way of *special revelation* was the apostle of the Gentiles ; as soon as the mystery was made known to him the word of God was completed, it was given to Paul to complete (*πληρῶσαι*) it. (See Colossians i. 25.) He could say as none other even of the Apostles, "be followers together of me." We know that so far from that having been a general thing, "all they which are in Asia" were turned away from him ; and at his first answer no man stood with him, but all forsook him. The fashion then as now was the other way. Since the days of the Apostle, God has graciously been pleased to recover much of His truth by vessels of His own choosing ; of such the word says, "remember your leaders who have spoken to you the

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word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, *imitate their faith.*” (Heb. xiii. 7.) The greatest favour that could be accorded to any saint of God on earth is to be a *friend of Christ*. In David’s day those who knew what Israel ought to do, were his friends and surrounded him at Ziklag and Hebron; in these days those whose one desire is to please the Lord and answer to His longings, surround Him in spirit in heaven where He is crowned, and surround Him also on earth where He is despised and rejected, “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you; henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” The Lord grant that many hearts may be aroused at this moment to seek as His friends His mind for this present time, undeterred alike by the indifference and heartlessness of His own people, and by the deadly opposition of the world and its prince. W. T. T.

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captives, or oppressed where they would have ruled had they been faithful to the line of God's interest at the time.

Surely we see in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the history of the church on the earth, and very markedly in our own day, and as it will be till the coming of the Lord, that those who are led by the Spirit of God devotedly in the line of His interests, are helped, not only by increased light and support from Him, but also by increased joy and usefulness, because they are seeking His things. And surely there could not be found on earth, any path with greater or more perfect blessings.

The Lord lead all our hearts more into it, for His name's sake.

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THE more I read the Psalms, and the more I see God's mind, and what the Spirit would teach in them, the more I see Christ's sufferings with Israel, in

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holy fulfilling of righteousness, but taking His place with the godly ones in their feelings—the right feelings; yea, He the pattern and spring of them. It gives the deepest sense of what the Lord went through, and it is different from atonement. But how deep they must have been, loving them as He did as God's people.—J. N. D.

WE may have the power of the new name now and the white stone. We shall have the reality of them in glory. If we are going on with the most delightful company of Christians, and not going on with God individually, we shall have a very poor time of it. If we make Christ our Friend personally, we shall have a very good time of it down here with Him, in spite of men and circumstances. The only thing that makes any path bright is having Christ in it. R. E.

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THE FORLORN HOPE.

A FEEBLE band,
We look unto the Father's throne ;
 Lord, we would stand
For Thee and for Thy church alone,
All rights surrender but Thine own !

Still upon earth
Thy power and succour are the same ;
 We know no worth
But the bright lustre of Thy name,
Kindling our spirits into flame.

Naught can destroy
Its virtue, though all else decline ;
 All turns to joy,
At one command, one look of Thine,
As when Thou mad'st the water wine.

Thus are our hearts
United in one common tie ;
 And faith imparts
The certitude of victory ;
Whether we live for Thee, or die !
 E. L. B.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter ix.

IN the eighth chapter we had the testimony given, the divine word of the Saviour: the ninth chapter refers to the testimony of His works. The Lord sets aside the entire governmental system of the Jews. He speaks too of Himself as scarcely being any more in this world; but so long as He was in it, He must do the works of His Father who had sent Him, for although He was God present in this world, He always takes the place of a man subject to God, and this specially in John's gospel, where His Person is thrown into relief. Satan tried to make Him go outside this position in the temptation in the wilderness, but He remained firm and perfect in it. He is always the sent One, although He be the Son of God, and one with the Father.

Crossing this poor world, the Lord meets with a man blind from his birth, a type of man in general, and specially of

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held the people's souls in captivity. Come to save, and in any case not to judge, but to bring the word of life to man;—through man's perversity, the effect of His coming would be judgment. Those who made pretension of seeing, but who were blind leading the blind, would be blinded all the more because the light was there; but it was none the less true that He was there in sovereign grace to give sight to others who were blind. (Vers. 39, 40.) As light, the Lord put man to the test; as Son of God in power, He gave sight to those who saw not, but who had the consciousness by His word, and by the knowledge of His Person, that they were blind; and this knowledge was founded on faith in His word.

GRACE AND GOVERNMENT.

THERE are two distinct principles on which God deals with man as such; and on which also He deals with His people. These two principles are grace and government. The former is the

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blessed characteristic of God, He is the "God of all grace." The gospel is the great setting forth of this principle, as the church in glory will be the eternal witness of it. God takes up a person and blesses him absolutely, without any reference to how he has behaved, or what he deserves. That this might be done consistently with the claims of righteousness against the sinner, the cross was necessary. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Government, on the other hand, is the reverse of this. It takes cognisance of the behaviour of the person under it, and regulates its conduct towards him by his merits. The principle of government we get in those words in 1 Peter ii. 14, "Governors are for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." This word applies to human government, but the principle is the same whatever the sphere in which government is exercised.

God judges as Almighty Governor of

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all, and judgment goes upon the ground of man's behaviour. Thus in the final judgment we read, "They were judged each one according to his works."

Now these two principles of grace and government find an exhibition in the family of God, and it is most important for us to remember that God acts towards us as His people on both these principles.

If I forget His grace when I have failed I might get into despair. If I forget His government, I might grow careless; not remembering that "if we live after the flesh we are about to die," and our reaping depends upon our sowing.

I wish to refer to an example of God's acting on these two principles in the history of Abram.

In the first place, of course, the call that made Abram a saint was sovereign grace. He was born among idolaters and was the object of God's electing favour just as distinctly as the chief of sinners. And the same is true of every saint of God. Salvation is all of grace.

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“Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” But now that God had brought him to Himself, he came into the place where government as well as grace would be exercised towards him; and it is the same thing with ourselves when brought to God.

Abram has not been long in the place of favour before, under the severe pressure of circumstances, he gives up acting on the principle of faith, on which alone we can please God, and adopts the world's principle of sight. He had gone to Canaan in faith, in obedience to the divine word. There he meets with a famine and without consulting God he does what prudence would suggest, and what every man of the world would well understand—he leaves the land of famine for Egypt, the land of supply.

Now Egypt and Canaan respectively represent the two principles of sight and faith. God as Creator made them to picture these two principles for us. Egypt is a country that draws its re-

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sources from itself. It has a river that supplies it, as it were, independently of heaven. Canaan, on the other hand, was watered from above. It would have perished unless remembered in heaven, as Israel would have done in the wilderness had Jehovah forgotten to supply them. The physical characteristics of the countries are contrasted in Deuteronomy xi. Thus when Abram went down from Canaan to Egypt, his action was symbolical of what his heart was really doing. He was going from faith to sight; from being a man of faith, to become a man of the world.

Now we must notice that Abram got what he sought. And as a rule it is so with people. If they seek money, they get it. Or praise of men, they get it. Or an improved worldly position, they get it. "Verily they have their reward," as the Lord said. For when Abram comes back from Egypt we find both himself and his companion Lot in flourishing circumstances. (Gen. xiii. 5.) Another thing to be remarked is that the moment Abram was on the

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path of sight, away in spirit from God, he makes an untruthful compact with his wife Sarai, which is suggested by the principle of human prudence. "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister." (Gen. xii. 13.)

This does not save him from trouble, but God delivers him. "He reproveth kings for their sake." This is pure grace. But the grace of God is more conspicuously shewn in chapter xiii. For God brings him, not merely out of Egypt, but to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning. And there, at the place of the altar that he had made at first, he calls on the name of Jehovah. This is grace like that of which we read in Hosea, "She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Grace reinstates the soul in its original brightness.

But now we must notice God's governmental ways, as I believe them to be, with Abram in connection with this turning aside. Although his own soul

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is restored to God, and the principle of sight, or the world, is judged in his heart, as we see beautifully displayed at the end of this chapter, where he gives up all the land to Lot; yet the mark of Egypt appears in his family, when it no longer is seen in himself. Abram was a man of faith. He had come up out of Egypt without any love for Egypt, but not so his nephew Lot whom he had taken into Egypt with him. This we see in the end of Genesis xiii.

There was one strip of the land of Canaan that was *like Egypt*. A lovely country that was like the garden of the Lord, well watered everywhere, not by the rain of heaven, but by a river "like the land of Egypt." Lot had a taste for a land like Egypt, a land that Abram had taken him to see. It was a place where a man might live without dependence upon heaven. What an attractive place for our hearts naturally! Abram could give it up, but not so Lot. Still one thinks that it must have been a bitter day for Abram when he saw

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Lot taking the path of sight which he, alas! had once shewn him. The principle that on one occasion marked the uncle, permanently marked the nephew.

They parted; Lot adopting worldly or Egyptian principles, and Abram walking still before God. The one sowing trouble for himself because of God's government; the other treading the path, though trying to the flesh, yet of which it is written, "her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." May the Lord help us to walk in them.

Now was this, we may ask, the end of Egyptian principles in Abram's family? Alas, no. The next person in whom they appear is Sarai, and here Abram himself falls under them. There was in Abram's family a handmaid of Sarai, an Egyptian. That word Egyptian carries the mind back to that journey of Abram into Egypt. And we see that the principle that governs Sarai's mind now is the same that governed Abram's mind then. She gives her maid to be her husband's

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wife. It was an act that *seemed* the only way out of a difficulty. There was no thought of God in it. The result was long trouble again under God's government. It was fifteen years before the result of this act was put out of Abraham's house, in the casting out of the bondwoman and her son. And then it was with a broken heart to Abraham. And it was not until this point that the last trace of that turning aside into Egypt disappears from his house.

Now all this is not the tale of God's grace, but it is an illustration of His government. If Abram relieves himself by giving up divine principles, we find two results. In the first place, the blessed power of God restores the soul; and in the second, the government of God gives him to taste the bitterness of those principles on which he has acted, when they appear in other members of his family.

It is one thing to go into the world, and quite another to get the worldliness out of the household when once we

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have got it in. Still the discipline of God is not in anger, but it is that of a Father, in order to our being partakers of His holiness. "Shall we not be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" It needs much grace to sustain the spirit in passing through the governmental consequences of our actions. Yet it is here that grace is occasionally displayed in the brightest way, as we see in David's history, 2 Samuel xv. and xvii.; which is an illustration of what we have in Peter, "humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt us in due time."

C. D. M.

FRAGMENT ON EPHESIANS.

THE exhortations in Ephesians are based first on the nature of God, after which we are created (chap. iv. 24), together with the indwelling of the Spirit of God. (Ver. 30.) (The individual exhortations begin verse 17.) Thence we have relationship ; imitators of God as dear

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children (chap. v. 1), Christ being the pattern still; the divine nature, love and light, manifested in Him, being the measure. Conflict comes in here, not with flesh, but as belonging to God, with wiles of the devil, that would take me out of my place of manifestation of what is of God as seen in Christ; which is our measure here. In the church it is not responsibility, but Christ's love completing His delight, and caring for it and nourishing it; only it is subjected to Christ. So that the exhortation proper, is only to the children. Though the conflict of Israel under Joshua in Canaan is alluded to, yet the apostle has in his mind the practical christian application. The conflict is there, our strength is in the Lord. But the character of victory here is to stand fast where God has set us, and not let Satan's wiles deceive us; for, holding to Christ, strength is not in question. Christ has overcome Satan and has all power; he flees when we resist him as an adversary.

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Although Christ cleanses the assembly to fit it for Himself as His bride, yet it is not here the idea of bearing sins and suffering. It is an object of special affection which He would have for Himself; and so cleanses, to make it what suits Himself and His love to it. He delights to have it what His own mind delights in; and this is blessed.

J. N. D.

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.

CHRIST was never sanctified unto obedience, though He took that place. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He was born that holy thing. *We* are sanctified to *His* obedience. Satan sought to get Him out of it in the wilderness, to do His own will if He was Son of God, but He remained surely faithful. Obedience He learned, for it was new to Him, and that in a world of sin and suffering, and went on to death in it, and the death of the cross; yea, drinking that dreadful cup where His obedience was absolute in its perfection.

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But He *does* sanctify Himself to glory, as man for our sakes. And this shews what a completely heavenly sanctification according to Christ in glory, ours is, and is *now*. Hereafter we shall be perfectly like Him, but we know Him now; and this is by the truth. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

J. N. D.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

It is the strain that tests the strength of every one. The trying of our faith is the fruit of our sufferings, and hence "blessed is the man that endureth." "The trying of our faith worketh endurance." We understand very little of our history here, if we do not observe that we are subjected to a trial by fire, with regard to every advance, or new activity of faith. If we stand the test, the faith is assured, and there is decided

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progress. There is another step in advance ; another round of the ladder is reached ; so that "your faith groweth exceedingly." The stability of our gain must be tested. Satan is opposed, and at every new step he has new toils and obstructions to hinder and throw us back. When we are defeated, and if we do not recover ourselves, the step we had taken was not in faith ; and when it is so, the check we have received too often suggests a retreat, and that to more than one step backwards, in order to reach some point where we think rest can be assured, because we have become disheartened and weary of the conflict. However, even when there is faith, there is often much self-confidence, as with Peter, and the self-confidence having been exposed by the test, the danger then is that we drop to the rear, discouraged, instead of going on with more distrust of self, but more dependence on God. Hence the Lord says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

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not simply with Christ, I say it is impossible to go on, and there is the wish to return to Egypt. It is remarkable how dispensational platitudes or criticisms will be embraced and be discussed while the conscience shrinks from the sight of the onward step, which if accepted, must necessitate an increased forgetting of the things behind. One may speak of anything but of the Man of God's purpose. What He did for us, or what we shall be in heaven hereafter, will be listened to and welcomed, but what is refused is, that He is the One to supplant the old man, and thus connect us with Himself where He is; so that I am to live here in the scene of my own natural life, in the manner of His life, entirely for Him, and His interests. This only is true progress.

May the Lord lead us all fully into it.

JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY.

ONE all-transcending sight to me,
Though glory circling glory be,
A joy beyond all joys to see,
My Saviour.

In speechless rapture shall I trace
The holy beauty of that face,
Nor turn to glories from its grace,
My Saviour.

Once marr'd by sorrow,—radiant now,
For joy, which in its fulness Thou
Alone canst know, illumines Thy brow.

Eternal Son ! heaven's joys were Thine,
In Godhead glories Thou didst shine,
But distance, guilt, and woe, were mine.

Could love then rest ! It led Thee where
I lay in darkness and despair,
That I Thy paradise might share,
My Saviour !

A new thing 'neath the sun was seen,
For God a Man on earth has been,
Now Man in glory fills the scene !

New joy e'en heaven itself hath found,
New glories circle Thee around,
New voices the new song resound.

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Light crowneth Love! Oh, glorious day!
The former things have pass'd away—
Pain, sorrow, parting, death, decay.

All finish'd is God's high behest,
On earth, in heaven, His people blest,
And He in His own love doth rest.

His glory shines in full display,
Nor sun nor moon need add one ray,
God's presence is eternal day.

For this I wait! nor would forego
The blessed privilege to know,
And follow in Thy path below,
My Saviour.

A little while my Lord to own
Where once Thou wast despised, unknown,
Betray'd, rejected by Thine own.

Be all my glory now Thy cross,
Thy interests mine, all else but dross,
For Thee I welcome shame and loss,
My Saviour.

To please Thee, Lord, be all my care,
To meet Thee I with joy prepare,
Be Thou my heaven, or here, or there,
My Saviour!

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter x.

THE tenth chapter, in John's Gospel, terminates the Lord's history down here. The Good Shepherd, come from the Father, will find out His sheep, notwithstanding the opposition of the enemies of the truth and of God, and will give eternal life to those who hear His voice.

This chapter, so precious to believers, gives us a picture of the entire work and position of the Lord. Nevertheless we do not see Him driven out of this world, as He is constantly presented in John, but we see Him putting His sheep out Himself, according to God's will; His sheep whom He knows, and of whom He is known. Then He is "the door of the sheep;" He lays down His life Himself, no one taketh it from Him; lastly, He and the Father are one. Though He be a sent and obedient Servant, He is yet one with the Father; the sheep too are His, although it be

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THE history of Jonathan's victory at Michmash has an interest for God's people in the present day. It was a time of grievous declension in Israel, but that was just the opportunity for faith to be in exercise, and to be displayed. In this Jonathan did not fail.

He had smitten the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, "and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal." (1 Sam. xiii. 1-3.) That victory seemed to have cost them dear. They were summoned from their homes after Saul, to see themselves confronted by an invading army, of chariots and horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore for multitude, who came

up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

The reminiscences of Gilgal did not inspirit Israel. They took no comfort from the past. Chariots, and horsemen, and footmen had proved no obstacle to victory when their fathers marched after Joshua from Gilgal to do battle with the enemy. But now, confronting the huge host, abject terror seized them, and the descendants of the invincible soldiers under Joshua hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. Where was the God of Israel? They had forgotten Him, and the very meaning of their name—Israel. And some more abject than the rest, called Hebrews, being those who were content to dwell among the Philistines, actually put the Jordan between themselves and their exasperated masters. Such was the moral condition of Jehovah's people.

And what of the king? He had begun his reign well by delivering the city of Jabesh from the hands of Nahash the

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Ammonite. He had inspirited the people to march against Ammon, the Spirit of God having come upon him. (xi. 6.) But now, tested by one command, only one, namely, to wait for Samuel seven days at Gilgal, he failed, and he fails in the way we are so apt to fail. He did not wait the seven days out. He went to Gilgal evidently in obedience to the prophet's direction. He waited six whole days, but Samuel came not. The seventh day was running out without any word of Samuel's approach. Had he forgotten his word? Was he unmindful of Israel's condition? Had Jehovah, whose prophet he was, forsaken His people? Saul looked at his diminished army, now reduced by defection to six hundred men. He looked at the host arrayed against him. To human eyes his case was hopeless, his condition desperate. King over God's people he had practically forgotten God, and His many interpositions in the past, yet he would outwardly honour Him, and resorted to sacrifices, as men turn to a charm. Had not Samuel, when the

same enemy threatened them at Mizpeh, offered up a burnt offering to which the Lord immediately and manifestly responded? (vii. 10.) That was true. But the circumstances in his case were very different. Israel were just as unworthy on the one occasion as on the other. The Philistines, too, were unchanged. But Samuel was faithful to God, so God could hearken to him. Saul, on the other hand, by sacrificing because Samuel had not appeared, was really disobeying God. The Lord would not allow burnt offerings and peace offerings to avail for one who was practically unbelieving and disobedient. Israel had learnt a similar lesson, when the ark was taken captive. And its absence from its proper place in the tabernacle might have reminded Saul of it. Those two * Jews, exorcists, at Ephesus were taught a similar lesson, as to the use of the name of Jesus, when the man in whom the evil spirit was

* Seven sons of one Sceva were exorcists, but two only of them were concerned in the instance related by Luke.

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leaped on them, and overcame both of them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. (Acts xix. 13-17.) Jesus is the Christ the Son of David, but those Jews did not believe on Him. There was, there is power in the name of the Lord Jesus, if faith in Him, and obedience to Him characterise the one who would make use of it.

Saul could not implicitly trust the prophet. Like Adam, placed on the ground of responsibility for the continuance of the kingdom in his line, he failed to keep the only command given to him on his election to the throne. He offered his burnt offering, but ere he had time, it would seem, to offer the peace offerings Samuel appeared. (xiii. 10.) Samuel had not failed to keep his appointment. Saul failed to wait the seven days out. Had we seen him on the sixth day, we might have said, 'See what it is to be obedient to the prophet's word. In the position of positive danger in which the king is placed, he is nevertheless obedient, awaiting Samuel's arrival.' Confidence,

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however, at last failed him, and he commenced to make his supplication to the Lord. He thus failed to trust God, and to obey the prophet. He lost, therefore, the continuance of the kingdom in his line.

It is the history of the first man over again. And as with Adam so with Saul, faith is displayed in the son, not in the parent. Abel manifested his faith in God's word, and obeyed implicitly, which Adam had failed to do. Jonathan is seen as the man of faith, counting on God, when Saul could not. Saul would sacrifice to make supplication to the Lord. Jonathan stayed not to sacrifice, but went boldly forward. Sentence passed on Saul, the king remained under the pomegranate tree with all that was left of Israel's host, namely, six hundred men, whilst the spoilers went out in three bands from the huge Philistine encampment, and ravaged the country.

Saul and his little band they let alone. His fear that they would come down on him at Gilgal had not been realised.

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What need was there to attack him, if he did not and could not oppose them? They let him alone. A condition of things this was in which they might glory. The people of Jehovah, once irresistibly victorious, are now cowed and helpless, whilst witnessing the unchecked devastation committed by their enemy in their land. Saul had sacrificed the burnt offering, but no auspicious answer had come from God. Samuel had come to Gilgal, and had left it, but no attempt had been made to avenge Israel of their enemies. The priest Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, wearing an ephod, was with Saul, yet no communication, it would appear, was vouchsafed him from Jehovah. All seemed dark and disheartening. Was God's arm shortened? No. But faith was wanted to lay hold of it. That Saul had not. It was just that, however, which distinguished Jonathan.

No change for the better had taken place in the affairs of Israel, when Jonathan said to his armour bearer, "Come, and let us go over to the

Philistines' garrison that is on the other side. But he told not his father." (xiv. 1.) Jonathan had faith in God, and he viewed the whole matter in its true light. "Come," he said, repeating his invitation, "and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

The Philistines were uncircumcised. They bore not in their persons the mark of God's people. That was the key to the position. The Lord might not work for Israel, if Israel was unfaithful; but He would not, He could not, work for the uncircumcised. Viewing the question in this its true light, it was no longer a question of the relative strength of the opposing hosts; but what were the enemy in God's eyes? They were uncircumcised. That was enough for Jonathan. The question of numbers was nothing, if it was a battle between Jehovah and uncircumcised ones. Looking at the matter in that light, he could and did count on God. "It may be

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that the Lord [*i.e.* Jehovah] will work for us, for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few." (Chap. xiv. 6.)

Faith is bold but not rash, nor does it vaunt itself. Jonathan and his armour bearer were to fight; but to the Lord he looked to save them. Moreover he told not his father. Of what use to take Saul into his confidence? who would only have weakened his hand, as he afterward marred the victory. Nor did he wait till the 600 were convinced of the possibility of the scheme. They never would have been convinced of it. Nothing but success could, to the natural man, have justified it. Yet Jonathan did not go alone. He sought the concurrence, the help, the companionship of one who was true-hearted like himself, and he found it. His armour-bearer's heart was prepared of God to respond to the invitation of Jonathan. How rash! some might have said. What arrogance and exclusiveness, another might have exclaimed. But he was wise. He was willing,

ready, and anxious to work with any one who had like faith, but he could not seek the countenance and personal assistance of such as had not, and who could not have worked on the only right principle on which he could go forward—that of faith in God. If one was found who could fight with him on that simple ground, he gladly availed himself of his company and help. But he must work on that ground whatever others might do. And who now would blame him? Who would hesitate to applaud him?

Faith is bold, but it is not presumptuous. Its essence is dependence on God. So, though Jonathan did not wait for numbers, he would wait on the Lord to open up his way. He would see how God would direct, and follow implicitly divine guidance. (Vers. 8-10.) They soon got it. Discovering themselves to the men of the garrison, the uncircumcised despising them as Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they hid themselves, (11) invite them to come up to them. They went up, climbing on their

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hands and feet. Courting certain destruction, most would have thought had they seen them. Going to assured victory, Jonathan would have said, if any onlooker had asked him. He knew it was for victory. So he encouraged his armour bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." (12.) In verse 10, he had said, "If they say thus, Come up unto us: then we will go up; for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand." The victory would be Jonathan's and his armour bearer's. But he gained it for Israel.

How easy would it have been for the Philistines to have hurled those two down the precipice, or cliff, and thus to have frustrated Jonathan's purpose, and to have dashed to the ground all hope of Israel's deliverance. But God ordered it otherwise, for Jonathan and his armour bearer had God's glory and the interest of the people at heart. Once among the uncircumcised the issue was not doubtful. They slew about twenty men, "They fell before Jonathan; and

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his armour bearer slew after him." And God immediately acted. "There was a trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled; and the earth quaked; so it was a very great trembling." (15.) God's power was put forth for Israel's benefit, the moment there appeared a man of faith to count on it. The Lord made the host to tremble, and the earth to quake. What a solemn moment for the enemy. Hearts gave way, boldness vanished from their ranks, and the very earth trembled beneath their feet.

Jonathan and his armour bearer fought alone, but the interests of the whole redeemed people they made their own. Jonathan counted on the victory for himself and his companion, but he looked for the deliverance of the host, and of the land of Israel as well. Exclusive he might seem in his way of acting, but he was not sectarian. Nothing short of the interests of God's people as a whole were his concern that day. He conquered, but to the Lord he ascribed

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it, and the people said, "He hath wrought with God this day." (45.)

Faith makes a man bold, but not rash, exclusive perhaps, but not sectarian. It does not vaunt itself. It ascribes all success to God. And if in conflict it is manifested, the interests of God and of His people are the interests it seeks to further. Jonathan fought, and the Lord saved Israel that day. God's power was ready to exert itself as of old. It was Israel who had really been in the way of their own deliverance. God wrought. He worked on the hearts of the Philistines, filling them with fear and sending confusion into their ranks. "The multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another." (16.) How easily God can scatter a huge host, and enervate the strongest, when His people look to Him and go forward in simple dependence on His power, and trust in His guidance!

C. E. S.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY.

THERE are two places in which God blessed and blesses His people ; at one time on the earth ; at another, in heaven. Israel was blessed on the earth in Canaan. The saints now are blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. The earth suits the natural man ; it was given to the sons of men. The spiritual only could enjoy heaven ; hence, there is an identity between the spiritual and the heavenly. Every conscientious person knows how readily he is attracted by the pleasing things on earth ; and how entirely distinct, and at variance they are from heavenly things. We now are a heavenly people ; but we are set on earth, and the exercise to our faith is to walk in consistency with our calling.

If it be not accepted that we are heavenly, there must be endless confusion in the attempt to regulate the

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hindered and checked. It is not that He would lead us to despise or disregard the comforts which our Father's care so continually provides for us in our path here; and He is ever ready to succour, and to console, and to help us in our infirmities: but while most effectually strengthening with all power according to the might of His glory unto all *patience*, He would satisfy our hearts with heavenly joys, so that even if we were deprived of all the comforts here, we should still have "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

FRAGMENT.

THE unity of the body cannot be touched, for the Holy Ghost unites to Christ all those who have been baptised by the Holy Ghost: we received it; and they are members of the one body. It is the unity of the Spirit we have to keep; that is, to walk in that power of the Spirit which keeps us in unity on the earth, and that needs "endeavouring."

J. N. D.

JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter x. 1-7.

IN that which we have considered up to the present, we find at the same time general principles, and the description of the Lord's work in the midst of the people. He uses the customs for flocks known in that country, to describe that which He had been, and that which He had done in His life, and in His service down here. But it was all over with the sheepfold. He leads His sheep out; the others were only reprobates, rejected themselves in rejecting Him; all who recognised Him, Him and His voice, followed Him and were led forth, outside. This very fact throws the Lord's Person and authority into relief. The law and the ordinances had been established by God's own authority, and the law was the perfect rule for the children of Adam. But here we have to do with the law, a dispensation of God, and not with what it is in its

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authorise the sheep to follow them. Israel remains in its old state in the hardness of its heart ; whilst the Christ is the door of the sheep.

Now we find the happy results of this ; the position of the sheep that follow this voice. If any one enter by the door, he shall be saved. Salvation was found in the Shepherd, whilst the fold could not give it. The sheep should be free ; the fold gave it a kind of security, but it was the security of a prison ; the sheep should find pasture, it should be fed in the rich meadows of God : this is Christianity in contrast with Judaism. Christianity gives salvation, liberty and divine food. Security is no longer confinement, but the care of the good Shepherd. Free under His care, the sheep feed in safety in God's vast and rich pasturage.

MOUNT MORIAH, "AFTER THESE THINGS."

IN Genesis xxii. the history of Abraham is at its highest stage ; but before he is brought to this, there is much of practical importance in the preceding chapters. We read, chapter xxii. 1, "after these things God did tempt Abraham ;" what things ? is the inquiry. The answer furnishes a great practical lesson for every one of us—a lesson of very deep solemnity.

There were two things that had to be corrected in Abraham (one in his heart, and the other in his household), ere he could be conducted to the highest point in his practical career. He had to have his heart freed from an old root that had long remained there and had sprouted again and again. There was a little bit of unbelief in the father of the faithful ; a reserve with which he started on his course at first ; and this root had been

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allowed to remain unjudged for many a long year.

This is very important for each of us. We have to consider what there may be keeping us back, for we long for more deep-toned devotedness, a more pronounced discipleship. We long to be devoted, we pray for it continually, and perhaps we are not aware when breathing that desire into His ear, what form the answer may take. I would put it plainly to your heart and mine too—Is there anything that is keeping us back from entire whole-hearted devotedness? If there is, that point must be met, that root must be judged, before the aspiration of the true heart to be more true to Himself can be fulfilled.

This is very solemn. The Holy Ghost does not screen the faults of God's people. He has given the record of them for our souls' deepest blessing. When Abraham started on his career, he demanded of Sarai that she should declare him her brother; he feared if their relationship were known, that he would come to grief. Denying the re-

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lationship was unbelief. The first time this root sprouted and brought forth fruit was in Egypt. (Chap. xii.) He went down into Egypt to get out of pressure in the place which God had called him to. But even when he got out of Egypt, and back to Bethel, that root had never been judged. That such a one as Abram should go on year after year with an unjudged root in his heart is most solemn. For the heart to be fully judged, we need to be in the light of the divine presence. It is far better to learn what is in my heart in His presence, than by bitter experience. If in the secret of His presence I find out the roots that are there, and judge them, they will never sprout—never. I do not want to chill any heart, but if these roots are not judged they *will* sprout. Are you conscious of any reserve in your soul? It is wonderful to see how saints of God can go on with unjudged roots; it may be pride, ambition, covetousness, no matter what; and all the time we may be praying for progress, but this is hindering us, and we cannot

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get on to the point we aspire to, till it is judged.

In chapter xx. this root appears in Abraham again ; but at last he is brought to make full, free confession, and to judge what was in his heart.

In chapter xxi. the bondwoman is cast out ; and then, house and heart being cleansed, " Now," says the Lord, " I can conduct you to the highest point." It was "*after these things*" that God could bring him on ; he was now in a position to respond to the call of God, and then God *tried* him.

What deep-toned devotedness this testing called forth in Abraham ! And now let me ask what was the basis, the spirit, and the object of it all ? The basis was, " Abraham believed God ;" not merely something about Him, but he believed God ; he knew whom he believed. God was his object and the perfect covering for his eyes ; God filled the vision of his soul. God was everything to Abraham ; that is the true basis of all

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devotedness—God so the One before our hearts that we may trust Him for everything. Have you this practical heart-knowledge of God? Are all your springs in Him, so that you are rendered independent of creature streams? Have you such a sense of what He is deep down in your heart, that human props have no place there? Human props give way, and creature streams run dry, but faith finds in the living God an immovable Rock, an exhaustless Fountain.

Abraham stands on Mount Moriah, and bears witness to all created intelligence, that he has found God as the stay of his whole moral being; he could trust God for Isaac on the altar as well as before he was born. This trial did not come a single moment before Abraham was able to bear it. "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory," &c. God never implants faith that He does not put it to the test. Is

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it that it all shines forth for the glory of Abraham? No, but for the glory of God. He is called to give up the one in whom all the promises were to be fulfilled; and that, after having enjoyed him for years. Who can conceive what Abraham's heart must have gone through! What assaults must Satan have made on him! But his one answer to all the temptation was, I have God, He has promised me a seed innumerable; and he was prepared to see Isaac reduced to ashes on the altar because he believed God.

This instance James takes up, and he says that Abraham was justified by works. He was justified by this act, which proved that his soul was reposing in simple confidence on God. It was the expression of a faith which rested on God without a cloud, so that God could say, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Here was the basis of devotedness. He could trust God when everything

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else had passed away ; his soul had got such a grasp of God that he could trust Him in the absence of all human agency. And yet, cowards that we are, we are often afraid of the very trial which strengthens our grasp in what God is. Seek to know more and more, all you have in God. "Wait only upon God." Find all your streams in Him, then you will be blessedly independent of all creature streams—all human props. God says, "There is that prop you are resting on, I must remove it, that you may rest in me." "You are sitting by that stream, I must dry it up, that you may get nearer to the Fountain."

In what spirit does Abraham walk to Mount Moriah ? In the spirit of *worship*. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." That is always the spirit of true devotedness. Abraham does not speak of the sacrifice he is going to make ; he moves on in all the calm blessedness of worship. "He stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son." "That is enough," says God. Yes ; we can say with deep

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joy that He reserved for Himself that step. When we contemplate this scene—the father and son going together to Mount Moriah—we are conducted to another scene where the Father and the Son went together to where God was to pour out on that blessed One all His wrath against sin; where all God's billows and waves passed over Him; where He took the cup of unmitigated wrath, and drained it, so that He has not left a single drop for you and me. There was no voice from heaven to intercept that stroke when the blessed Son of God bowed His head on the cross of Calvary. Oh! what a motive for deep-toned devotedness is here!

True devotedness has God for its object; and in the case of Abraham, that is brought out in that little word, "*from me*"—"thou hast not withheld . . . *from me*." People speak much of devotedness, but in order to make it truly so, it must have God for its basis, God for its object, and God for its motive spring. Anything

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else is that of a monk or a fakir ; but what stamps Abraham's devotedness was that it was done for God.

Let us turn for a moment to Hebrews xi. 17, " By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son." That is the inspired comment on this wonderful scene ; he did not take account of difficulties, unless it is to take occasion of trusting God more fully. The difficulties which discourage unbelief are food for faith. Not one of us should say, I have not got the faith of Abraham. If you have faith at all, you have all the faith spoken of in Hebrews xi. It is simply a question of using it, and the more you use it the stronger it grows. " Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." Faith glorifies God. What a harvest of glory came to God on Mount Moriah ! There was a man who was content to be stripped of all he possessed, because he had God. God was a covering for

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his eyes, and the resting-place of his heart. To him it was not God and Isaac—God and the means—but God *alone*.

This is of all importance. God must be all or nothing. If He covers our eyes we can see nothing else. Difficulties vanish; all is peace, victory and praise. He is glorified, and we are blessed. There is not a single need that He cannot meet. Grant me but this, that I am in the path of simple obedience, and I can trust Him for everything. Give Him the fullest confidence of your heart. Trust Him fully. Use Him. Draw largely upon His eternal springs. He delights to be used—to be trusted. “Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” Faith is the spring of practical christian life. “The just shall live by faith.” Blessed, precious, soul-sustaining, God-honouring principle of life. May we more and more wait upon God; as our faith grows, we get into all the largeness, fulness, and blessedness, that is in Him. Faith is the key that unlocks the treasury of God. Go and

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unlock it, and get all you need. "Borrow empty vessels, not a few," because you are going to be conducted to a source that is inexhaustible. Faith is a path which, when truly trodden, gets brighter and brighter—shining more and more unto the perfect day. Abraham was attracted at first by the beams of the God of glory; he turned his back on his country and kindred, not knowing where he was going. What had he got? *God*; and on he goes, step by step, stage by stage, wavering indeed here and there (for even he was open to the waverings of unbelief occasionally), but on he goes, till he stands on Mount Moriah, declaring plainly that he was prepared to give up all, because his vision was filled with the Lord his God.

May it be granted to each of us to walk more and more in the power of faith in the living God—"to endure as seeing Him who is invisible." The life of faith grows stronger and stronger, and is prepared for higher and deeper trial as we go on.

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Lord, lead us on closer and closer to Thyself, that we may be independent of all but Thee. May it be so to Thy praise, and to our deep, deep joy!

C. H. M.

THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

THE TWO MINISTRIES.

It is plain, from Colossians i. 23-29, that there are two ministries; the ministry of the gospel, and the ministry of the church. It is most interesting and important to ascertain the scope of each; where the first ends, and where the other begins.

The ministry of the gospel is universal, "proclaimed in the whole creation under heaven." And in Acts xvii. 30, the apostle says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." The gospel in its aspect is addressed to every one; as we read, "They went every where announcing the glad tidings." Our Saviour God desires that all should

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be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. The more vigour of life there is in any saint, the more, according to the leading of the Spirit, does such an one, man or woman, seek to make known Christ to sinner or saint. And I suppose there could not be any reviving in the church without a very marked energy in evangelistic work. The vitality of the body politic, the church, is declared by the force and effect with which Christ's deputed messengers gifted by Him for the purpose, carry each part of the truth suited to every ear. The blessed God is evangelistic. He so loved this world that He sent His Son. Our Lord's most affecting work on earth was in leading a sinner (the woman of Samaria) into a knowledge of the grace of God. Of this He could say, *par excellence*, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." The angels were the first evangelists; and the apostle of the Gentiles, to whom was peculiarly confided the mystery of