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The Gift of Grace.

BY THE

J. DENHAM SMITH.

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The God of Glory.

BY

REV. J. DENHAM SMITH.

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The God of Glory,

"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on, yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." Acts vii. 2—5.

There is a beautiful order in Christian life.

Abraham, a simple idolator, dwelling in Mesopotamia, was without God in the world, as every natural man is.

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God it was who appeared to Abraham. He was found of one who sought Him not.

But the God who appeared to him was a God of glory. One whom the carnal mind could never have seen, but who is revealed by the Spirit as possessing a power to draw to Himself—a power stronger than all obstacles.

Abraham's response to the divine call was at the first hindered by nature; but nature dies, and the response is complete.

God is the genesis—the beginning of everything that is good. *God*, it is said, appeared unto Abraham; was at the beginning—the root of things in his salvation.

Ere the world was created—when as the chaos spread itself around—it was God who said, "Let there be light

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and there was light." And ere the existence of those golden lustres that bespangle the heavenly firmament —it was God who said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven," and all these natural glories sprang into existence.

When the world shall be new-created God will be the beginning of it.

In heaven, the saints are now rehearsing their redemption to be all of God. It was by Him that the Seed of the woman was promised; by Him, Enoch was translated and the redeemed spirit of Abel, the first from this sin-stricken world, had its glorious conveyance to heaven, and not to hell. Could we summon every redeemed one, from Abel down to the present, we should find that in redemption and salvation it was *God* who had taken

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the initiative—who had made the first move in the conversion of the sinner.

When God comes and appears to a soul—not in visible form and glory, as He did to the patriarch, but simply through some truth, perhaps like one before us, He brings *Himself* into the scene—puts *Himself* before the sinner gives conviction of sin and along therewith a sight of the Saviour, so as to lead the sinner to peace and rest in Him by believing.

When God appears for salvation, He does not come to condemn, though God is a judge, or only as a Saviour, but as a *God of glory*."

It was as the God of glory that He appeared to Abraham—when He said, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." It was for no

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slight unsubstantial thing the Syrian was called; it was that he might have a heavenly country,—a jasper city,—that he might say, "*Heaven* is my fatherland, a golden city is my home."

He, poor Syrian, needed for such a call the *God of glory*. It was not easy for him to solve the question, Am I to leave my home, my kindred, and all I love? Am I to go from the place of my fathers' sepulture? And to go for what? For a country I have never seen? for a land never trodden? for there were no paths in the desert, no finger-posts in the wilderness!" Am I to give up all I value and go out? To leave all for One I have never seen or known before?" No, not so—God came not to him as a mere naked truth, God came to him with golden city, and in form most inviting and attractive,

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even as the God of glory, else Abraham methinks, would never have left his father's house.

Thus it is with the hope of our own calling! When God calls a sinner, it is from darkness into marvellous light, from the power of Satan to the kingdom of his dear Son,—it is from an earthly to a heavenly state, from being a vassel of Satan to share with Christ his throne, even as He is now on his Father's throne; it is that when He shall occupy, and on his head shall be many crowns, we may appear with Him, and dwell in the light and lustre of those crowns. For what *we* were, in our standing before God, *He* became; we had sinned—He took our sin; "He who knew no sin was *made sin;* not sin *in* Him but *on* Him.

As the Aaronic hand gathered toge-

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ther the sins of sinning Israel, and placed them down on the head of the victim, "so the Lord made the iniquities of us all" to meet on Him. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." God laid on Him our sin: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jesus came from the peerless glory, down to the stripes, the furrowed back, the bloody sweat, the contumely, the gall and shame, the cross; bore it all that He might have thee, sinner, as joint heir of his inheritance, as partner of his throne, as joint-possessor with Him of the Father's love.

Thus God, in his gospel, not only saves the sinner, but lifts him from his

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depths in sin to the heights of glory, from the deepest death to the highest life; not Eden life, not angelic life but *divine* life, *eternal* life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Oh! the unsearchable and untraceable riches of both the grace and glory of God.

But there is a further thing in the words I have read—how Abraham *fell short in his conduct.* It is said—"THE GOD OF GLORY appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." But instead of coming into the land God showed him, he actually *stopped in Charran!*

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And what made him stop in Charran? Nature; things around hindered him. He came only a little way. He had left the country of the Chaldeans, but had not come into Canaan. He had done much, but not enough. Alas for Abraham!

Some of you too have come but a little way; your eyes have been only a little opened; the world has yet power over you; you are *worldly* and *religious!* Your relations and companions hardly know what to make of you. You *say* you are for heaven, but your *life* shows you to be *on easy terms with the world.* Poor pilgrim! there is something more wanted—more to be known of death to things here—more seen of the hope of glory, to allure the eye and overcome nature.

How did God deal with this obstacle

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—how did He meet it? By *death*. It was met by death. Abraham's father died, the pilgrim son was liberated. I can speak personally here; many things which once held me with a tight hand and hindered, are now as dead to me Blessed be God! so we sing—

> "Rise, my soul, thy God directs thee,
> Stranger hands no more impede;
> Pass thou on; his hand protects thee,
> Strength that has the captive freed."

Ah! those stranger hands! the hands of the world, of nature, of the flesh, and sin. How they "impede!" I *can* say that I *am* dead to things I once loved, though no one loved the things of the world more than I.

But it murdered Christ, and is still a Sodom. Because of Christ, whom I now love, I am changed towards it. I do not want its follies or its pleasures.

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I say to every one who will have the world, "Have it; but do not say you have come out of it." Abraham had to *get out* of the old country to go to Canaan. You cannot be out of it if still in it. Do not speak of *the God of glory* if you are still serving the god of this world. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." You must be one thing or the other: there is no midway, no compromise—you must be of the earth, earthly, or of the heavens, heavenly. Ye must be born again.

Thus, when Abraham's father was dead he was not the same person, nor was Charran the same place. That one death! it changed the scene entirely. Abraham at once went out on

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a long emigration; stranger hands no more impede him; not only so, he walks on and on to the heavenly glory. He is plainly seeking a country. For not only, as said, "He removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell," but see now how, besides being dead to Charran, Abraham is reminded of his divine calling. He becomes re-awakened. The call of the God of glory is revived in him.

Further remark, how his walk in life comes in here. We must know our *full* calling, or our life and walk will ever be defective. While Abraham was living as if forgetting that God had called him to Canaan, he was satisfied with the country in which he tarried. It was not till solemnly awakened by the death of his father, weaning him from Charran, that he

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was alive to what God had called him to inherit.

Dear Christians, this is a practical point for us. If I do not see for what Christ has called me, that it is a *heavenly* calling, my life will not be heavenly. If I forget I am called to be a king, a priest, an heir, how defective my walk. But if I live in the energy of the truth that I am a priest, then shall I seek to stand before Him in all the sacred attire and service of that position. If I see that I am as Christ, how spotless my words, how taintless my affections, my life.

But if I am forgetful of the glorious hope of my calling—that He is coming again to receive me unto Himself, that where He is, in his own house, there I may be also, I shall fail to stand adjusted for that coming; *prac-*

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tically I shall not be ready for that home.

Death *weans*, but glory *allures*. To illustrate the latter: the Queen says, "There is a person whom I want to bring from a foreign land, to occupy an important position; he is to take care of my treasures."

When the messenger has reached him, and given him the message, everything around him becomes changed. He leaves his relations, his home and clime; thinks nothing more of the spices of Ceylon; or if in India, of the golden rivers, native sands, or Himalayan snows; and if asked to serve some foreign king, he would say, "Nay, impossible!—I cannot wait." Or if another said, "I want you to command a splendid ship;" "*Nay*," he would say, "My calling is different." So accord-

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ing to our heavenly calling we say—

"I'm a pilgrim bound for glory,
I'm a pilgrim going home."

We say, I have a crown in the promised land, gleaming with the rays of uncreated splendour; a harp tuned by no created fingers. He who made all things says, "I go to prepare a place for you." "Angels beckon me away, Jesus bids me come;" "my Father calls me, I must go to meet Him in the promised land." I am not of the world that fadeth away—

"Calm the dying taper's light—
Let me go home;
Glad my soul prepares for flight—
Let me go home;
For within those realms above,
Purchased by redeeming love,
Treasures are to which I move—
Let me go home."

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The object, next to Himself, which the God of glory presented to Abraham, was that city of which Paul speaks, where, in Heb. xi. 10, he says, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," and, doubtless, of which John, in Rev. xxi. 4, speaks, saying, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride [so beautiful and taintless] adorned for her husband."

What a city for a pilgrim to see, and to call his own!—a city of "pure gold," having "jasper walls," needing no sun neither moon to shine in it, "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

What allured Abraham, whether from the snares, riches, and entanglements of Egypt, or amidst the deep

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sorrows of the desert, was the promise of this city. Glancing at its peace and its love, and coming up from Egypt, to which he and Sarah had wrongfully gone, he could have said—

"Yes, I need thee, heavenly city,
My low spirit to upbear;
Yes, I need thee, earth's enchantments
So beguile me with their glare.
Let me see thee, then these fetters
Break asunder—I am free;
Then this pomp no longer chains me;
Faith has won the victory.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me!

City of the pearl-bright portal;
City of the jasper wall;
City of the golden pavement;
Seat of endless festival.
City of Jehovah Salem;
City of eternity!—
To thy bridal hall of gladness

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From this prison I would flee,
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me!"

Well may the hope of such a city allure, even as death and sorrow may wean. Brethren, it is the samo with our own hope. Ours is not so much a city—it is a higher thing. How blessed is it! How blessed *now*! To be associated with the Lord Himself! —to sit down as He is, in a divine perfectness, before God!—to reign endlessly with Him, to be a king and a priest; when He comes, to come with Him; when He reigns, to reign with Him; when He stands on Mount Zion, with the hundred and forty and four thousand, like Moses and Elias, in the glory, to stand with Him, to know his love, grace, form, and voice for ever and for ever! Ah this is

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glory! It is a sea without a shore! an ocean that cannot be fathomed! For ever and ever shall we stand over its mighty amplitude, casting down our line, saying, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Brothers and sisters, *can* we want anything more than this? There is nothing more. This is what we want the sinner to see. When the sinner *does* see it, he wants it. He does not want it before. "Eye, [the natural eye] hath not seen, nor ear [the carnal ear] heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, [the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But if thou art truly wanting them, thou hast seen them. God hath

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revealed them unto thee by his Spirit; the heavenly Paraclete, the divine Eliezer hath revealed to thee the glory and the riches of the heavenly Isaac.

This is his office. This He delights to do—reveal Jesus. And this is what Jesus Himself delights in, to be revealed and accepted. Will you now accept Him? He presents Himself: you accept.

When the Lord Jesus wants a sinner for Himself, what does He do? He just *presents Himself.* When they said to the damsel," "Wilt thou go?" her heart had *gone!* The tidings of Isaac, his riches, and the jewels had already done their work. O sinner, know the riches of our Divine Isaac. Know his love. See Him as He now presents Himself, and to you, in the gospel.

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Beloved saints, such, in a few words, is the order of Christian life:

1. God the beginning of everything, who calls by and to his glory.

2. Nature preventing our course, but death coming in, and so setting aside its power, stepping over all impediments.

3. Abraham not only entering the land but now, amidst many discouragements, sorrows, and trials, looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; which city, we think, as we have suggested from Rev. xxi., he may yet have. Beautiful city! the New Jerusalem, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Thus Abraham will get his city; but ye, beloved, who have owned a rejected Jesus, are *a new creation*, children of the mystery, ye are not so much for a city

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—though all things are yours, but "*ye are the body of Christ*;" and are *as He is*; one with Him, as the Head and the members are one— to be on the same Throne, and in the *same glory*— "*glorified together*."

Abraham's call as to grace was a true mirror of our own.

There was, as another has said, "No law, no preparatory process, no bringing Abraham through fear, through terror, in short through the caverns of hell to the knowledge of God; but God's revelation to the soul of the sinner is in the riches of his mercy." And I believe it is this which upturns the whole system of evil in the heart, and establishes upon its ruins the kingdom which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is thus the Lord presents himself in

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his gospel to the sinner. It finds him a sinner, in complete darkness of mind and conscience towards God. Finding him such He shines into him through the truth: God who commanded the light to shine, not AFTER the darkness, but OUT of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In the old creation God divided the light from the darkness. He does so in the new. Though we have the new nature we have also the old. "The light, at the first, God called day; the darkness he called night." We are not of the night, but of the day; children not of the darkness, but of the light.

And, as with Abraham's call—it was all of grace—so with the hindrances; they were all of nature-self. They were

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not of the new life that was in him; *that* through the heart in him, which God had given, would have done all and left all for God. Love reserves nothing from its object. God had spoken to the *heart* of Abraham. The heart had *divine* affections. But Abraham had the other heart still; which led him to linger on and on in Charran until death put an end to the evil. But few Christians live in the power of death to the things which are here. They live largely in the energy of the natural man, consulting its tastes, and its desires. Yet the natural man and sin are synonymous. Such need to bring *Christ's death* more into each scene. And if the death of Abraham's father was so powerful in altering Abraham's desire to live any more in Charran, how

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much more should *that* death effect us. How would the very thought of that death still our levity, sober our minds, and conform us to itself. One death in our own house makes many things quite different. That one death in this world! Oh! how it ought to affect us.

Can we say?

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Can we say?

Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

Can we say?

His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;
Now am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

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Ah! beloved, it is the death of Christ which liberates the soul from the world. It is knowing the deep love, value, freeness of his death, which ploughs down the whole course of evil within us: I cannot really know his death and indulge in the flesh, or live to self. I cannot have fellowship with His rejection and crucifixion, the death of God's own beloved one for me in this world, and be on easy terms, or admiring mind, towards the whole scene of its occurrence.

Added to this power by which I die to the world, is the alluring hope of the glory. The power of the expulsive principle — the greater expelling the lesser. The heavenly calling, the hope of glory taking the place of all else.

I believe the revelation of the heavenly city was *made* to the very

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heart of Abraham. I believe Christ, only true object here, is formed in the *heart* of the saint the hope of glory.

Oh, beloved! is He the one ruling, controlling object of your heart? Are you obedient to your heavenly calling? Are you looking for the glory? Now you are like other men. No one could tell by looking at you what you really are. It doth not *yet appear* what you will be; but it will appear. For when Christ, who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. Oh, hope most blessed! Are you living in its sweet, separating, and sanctifying power? Or are you like Abraham in Egypt, forgetting the hope that is in you.

But perhaps some one is saying, "I have no hope. I am conscious of my misery as a sinner. Beloved,

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I believe God never really shows the sinner his need without also showing him the remedy.

The Israelites in the wilderness were dying of the bite of the flying fiery serpents when God said to Moses, "Erect a pole." He did so. But what was that pole? It was simply a means of holding up an object. What are we, who preach Christ, but poles—our only work to hold Him up to the eyes of dying men. The pole which Moses put up might, or might not, have been valuable in itself; it had grown, graduated, shall I say, in the forest. The poles whom God uses may, or may not, have graduated in the schools of men. They are only of worth as *He* has taken in his hands, and uses them in holding up the object of his providing. "Put a serpent on the top of the pole," said

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God. "What is he doing?" the bystanders might have asked. "Tell them to look at the serpent on the pole and they shall live," said God. O! say some of you, "Moses told the people to do what we have been doing all our lives." No. He did not tell them to look *at themselves*, or *at their wounds*, or *at the pole*, as if that were anything. He told them to look at the object *on* the pole. They did look, and they were healed.

But was it the serpent that healed them? What, a serpent of brass! Nay, indeed! It was this, *God had told them that if they looked they should be healed.* God had given his word for it, that any who looked should be healed. It was not even *the look* that saved them, but that God had *said*, "Look, and you shall live."

Thus God tells us that we have only

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to look at Christ and we shall be saved. The serpent made in the likeness of the fiery serpent was a symbol of Him who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, *that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

O! I beseech you then to take your eyes off all others and look only to Him who says, "I, if I be lifted up will draw all unto me. Look now. Look and your soul shall live. It is God who says it: that if you do look, do believe in Him who died the death due to us, you shall be saved. May God bless you. May the Lord bless you.

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