

# THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND OF GOD

Notes of meetings  
at BIRMINGHAM 1953  
IPSWICH 1954  
EALING 1954 with  
G. R. COWELL

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# CONTENTS

## THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND OF GOD

*Meetings at Birmingham, May 23-25, 1953*

|                                                                                                              |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) Genesis 1: 26-27. Romans 5: 12-21. 1 Corinthians 11: 2-12 . . . . .                                      | Page<br>7 |
| (2) Ephesians 1: 3-10, 20-23; 3: 8-19 . . . . .                                                              | 19        |
| (3) Colossians 1: 12-18; 2: 9-10 Ephesians 5: 25-32. Genesis 2: 18, 21-24 . . . . .                          | 34        |
| (4) John 1: 1-18. Revelation 21: 9-10, 1-7 . . . . .                                                         | 48        |
| (5) 1 Corinthians 15: 20-28. 1 Chronicles 29: 10-13, 20. Ephesians 3: 19-21. 2 Chronicles 5: 13-14 . . . . . | 65        |

## IMAGE

*Address—Mr. W. W. Smart*

|                                                                                                   |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Colossians 1: 12-16. 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18.<br>Romans 8: 28-30. 1 Corinthians 15: 48-49. . . . . | 84 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

## SON OF MAN, SON OF ABRAHAM, SON OF DAVID

*Address—Mr. G. R. Cowell*

|                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Genesis 3: 14-15; 22: 15-18. Psalm 132: 1-5.<br>2 Corinthians 1: 19-20 . . . . . | 96 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

## THE ASSEMBLY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

*Meetings at Ipswich, April 16-18, 1954*

|                                                                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| (1) Matthew 28: 19. Acts 1: 1-16, 26; 2: 1-4, 14-18, 32, 33, 38-42, 46, 47 . . . . .             | 106 |
| (2) Acts 9: 1-6, 15-22, 28, 31. Romans 16: 25-27. Ephesians 3: 1-4. Revelation 3: 1, 2 . . . . . | 120 |

|                                                                                      |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (3) Acts 10: 9-20, 34-48. Ephesians 2: 14-22;<br>3: 1-6 . . . . .                    | <i>Page</i><br>139 |
| (4) Acts 11: 19-26; 12: 1-5; 13: 1-4; 14: 23-27;<br>15: 1-20, 22-29; 16: 5 . . . . . | 153                |
| (5) Acts 19: 1-10; 20: 17-21, 26-28. Ephesians 1:<br>5-12; 3: 10-12, 20-21 . . . . . | 172                |

## THE LOVE OF DIVINE PERSONS

*Address—Mr. W. W. Smart*

|                                                                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Romans 15: 30-33. Ephesians 5: 25-27; 3: 19.<br>John 16: 26-27. Revelation 21: 1-4 . . . . . | 185 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING

*Address—Mr. G. R. Cowell*

|                                                                         |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Psalms 2: 6-8, 12; 45: 1-9, 13; 22: 1-3, 22;<br>48: 1-3, 8-10 . . . . . | 195 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD

*Meetings at Ealing, June 5-7, 1954*

|                                                                                                                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| (1) Psalms 2: 1-12; 8: 4-6; 22: 1-3, 22; 24: 3, 8-10;<br>40: 6-8; 41: 13 . . . . .                                                   | 205 |
| (2) Psalms 42: 1-2; 45: 1, 6-9; 48: 1, 2, 8-10; 68:<br>17, 18, 24, 32-35; 69: 1, 2, 9; 72: 18-20 . . . . .                           | 219 |
| (3) Psalms 73: 1, 2, 17, 25, 26; 77: 13, 19, 20; 78:<br>65-72; 84: 1-7; 87: 1-7; 89: 6, 8, 15, 19, 52 . . . . .                      | 239 |
| (4) Psalms 90: 1, 2, 13-17; 91: 1, 2; 96: 7-10; 102:<br>1-3, 10, 23-28; 103: 1-5; 104: 1, 2; 105: 1-3;<br>106: 1-5, 47, 48 . . . . . | 256 |
| (5) Psalms 107: 1-9; 110: 1-4; 132: 1-9, 13-18;<br>133; 134; 146: 1, 7-10; 147: 1, 2, 12-15;<br>149: 5, 6; 150 . . . . .             | 273 |

## GOD DWELLING

*Address—Mr. G. R. Cowell*

|                                                                                                 |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1 Timothy 6: 14-16. Isaiah 57: 15. Exodus 25:<br>8-9. Psalm 132: 14. Revelation 21: 3 . . . . . | 292 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

## THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND OF GOD

### READING (1)

Genesis 1: 26, 27. Romans 5: 12–21. 1 Corinthians  
11: 2–12

G.R.C. It is in mind in these meetings to consider the headship of Christ as leading to the headship and supremacy of God. One feels sure that the Spirit of God will help in the enquiry because the truth of headship is so much needed and, one feels for oneself, so little known. I think we would all recognise that God's place in the universe must be that of head, and the incoming of sin has raised a challenge as to that, so that while God remains head, He cannot be other than head, yet His headship is disregarded in the world. But we wait for a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness", and righteousness involves that God's place should be recognised and fully accepted by every intelligent creature. Then it is a great thing to see that headship under God is committed to man, not to angels. Angels have had a place in connection with the maintenance of the rights of God and in representing God, but it would appear that the idea of headship as under God has been reserved for man, that order of being, and angels recognise that. Angels are referred to in our third scripture, and we shall find that they are referred to in scriptures that we may consider later. The unfallen angels carry out God's will without question, and they do not question God's purpose as to man. So at the outset God said, "Let us make *man*"—a very important statement in connection with the purpose of God as to man. There is no statement like that about anything else in the creation. It does not say 'Let us make light', or 'Let us make cattle', but God said, "Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness." This brings us in a

primary sense to what God's thought is as to man; God was to be represented in a full way in His creation, but it was to be through *man*—Adam, of course, being but a figure of Him that was to come, and the figure pales into insignificance when compared with the One of whom he is a figure. Adam's dominion was over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and over the cattle and over the whole earth, but the dominion of the Son of Man extends to heaven and earth. He is "head over all things". God was not primarily occupied with Adam but with Christ, even at the beginning.

Then it might be well to say that while scripture begins with God and man, later in this book the thought of Father and Son comes in in Abraham and Isaac, because for God to be fully known in His nature and attributes, revelation and relationship were necessary. Finally, in David and Solomon the two thoughts of manhood and sonship combine. That is, we see God's full thought, as far as the types could give it, as to man in David and Solomon, both being in the place of sonship typically, but filling out headship in a glorious way.

I thought this morning we might think of the initial features of headship seen in Genesis; of the way the Lord Jesus has laid the moral basis for His own headship in Romans 5, and then the general principles of headship in 1 Corinthians 11—that is, the woman and the man and God, the order.

T.W.C. Does headship stand related to glory? Is headship more in relation to glory, and sonship in relation to love?

G.R.C. It says in the last scripture we read that man is God's image and glory.

J.McK. Would the new heavens and the new earth make way for the full outshining of this, everything deriving from God in His own blessedness?

G.R.C. I think so. It is a "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness", and the One who has brought it into being says, "Behold, I make all things new." It is new *creation* and God in His supremacy.

Ques. Is that why it says "he that sat upon the throne"?

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. It is the throne, suggesting the supremacy of God.

J.McK. But it reaches us now in conditions of testimony, and that testimony has peculiar lustre in the way it does shine out.

G.R.C. Would you say what you have in mind as to reaching us now in conditions of testimony?

J.McK. In the presence of so much that is adverse, the believer comes in for the blessedness of it in the recognition of the great principle of headship, especially in Christ.

G.R.C. I am sure that is right, and in that connection a vessel is being formed which appreciates Christ's headship as no other ever could or will.

Ques. Would you say further what you had in mind in connection with the thought of headship and glory?

G.R.C. I think that would link with the outshining of God. Paul speaks of "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God"—that is a touch of headship. Christ is the image of God, and there is the radiancy of glory connected with that, and we have to keep in mind that that title, "the Christ", links with headship. No doubt the title "the Christ" will come before us as these meetings proceed, for it is a title that we need to give great consideration to.

E.J.B. What is involved in the word "in our image"?

G.R.C. Well, is it not needful for God to be expressed and represented, because He is the invisible God? The Lord Jesus is said to be the "image of the invisible God", and God ever remains invisible, "whom no man has seen, nor is able to see". Therefore the need of image becomes apparent, because if God, who dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man has seen nor is able to see, is to be apprehended intelligently in His creation, it can only be through an image, and the Christ is the image of the invisible God. There is a full representation of God in His moral character, in His nature and His attributes, in that blessed Person.

J.F.G. So right at the outset He had nothing less than that in His mind, in what is said here?

G.R.C. No, quite so. It is a marvellous statement. Adam, even in innocence, could only be in God's image in a limited way. In saying these words at the outset the person in God's mind was Christ. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; that is, He

takes precedence of Adam. He was always first in the mind of God, Adam being just a figure.

W.W.S. The word in verse 26 is in the plural, "Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness." Does that suggest that as to this matter Divine Persons took counsel together, do you think?

G.R.C. Well, it *may* leave room for that, but I am not quite clear about it. "Elohim" in the Old Testament, the word normally used for "God", is a plural word. The extraordinary thing is that in the Old Testament, which stresses that "Jehovah thy God is one Jehovah", a plural word is often used for God, but when you come to the New Testament, where God is declared as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the singular is used for God. In Ephesians 1, it is the "counsel of his own will", not the counsel of 'Their own will', so that I could not with certainty reply to your question. Mr. Taylor years ago said that this might be the plural of majesty, and this chapter has the majestic side in mind. It is "Elohim", God in His supremacy, that is in mind, and yet a God who would be known; a God who would not remain, as it were, in unapproachable light, though ever dwelling there, but a God who would be known in one who is His image.

Rem. At the end of verse 27 it refers to the singular pronoun, "in the image of God created he him".

G.R.C. That is interesting, yet there is the "let us" and "our". But we have to keep in mind that counsel does not mean agreement like three human beings agreeing together; it is "the counsel of his own will". I think counsel implies the way things are worked out. Purpose is the objective. God purposes something, but then He works all things according to the counsel of His own will; He counsels with Himself, as it were, and works things out according to the counsel of His own will. In Deity, as I understand it, there is only one will. J.N.D. says there is one will and mind and purpose, although separate willing in the detail of divine operations. But in spite of all that I am saying, I am not shutting out that there may be some veiled allusion to the Trinity in the passage.

Ques. In John 1 and Hebrews 1 the Son is referred to, and creation is attributed to Him, and yet on the other hand it is God speaking—in Son?

G.R.C. Yes. So that, while there may be a veiled allusion to the Trinity, I think the plural of majesty has its place here, and I think we should avoid—I speak subject to correction—the idea of counsel as being agreement between persons, because I understand that God is One in will and purpose—one in Essential Being.

Ques. May we not use the expression “Divine Persons” too much, thus rather weakening the thought of the unity of the Godhead?

G.R.C. I think there is a danger of that. The word Persons is useful in conveying what we mean as to the distinct activities of the Father and the Son and the Spirit, but I think it is well to limit the use of the words “Divine Persons” as much as possible, and rather to speak of “God”. It is scriptural to speak of God.

Ques. Is that again confirmed in Hebrews when it says of the Son, “who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power”? I was thinking of His glory, His substance and His power.

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. It is God speaking, in Son. The One in whom He is speaking is the One we know as the Son, but it is God speaking. He is the brightness of God’s glory; as you say, it puts it in the singular, and He is the expression of His substance. We can distinguish the Persons, but God is One in His Essential Being.

A.G.B. When we come to the way that divine counsel is to be put into operation, is it not remarkable that the singular word is used? I was thinking of verse 18 of chapter 2 and again of verse 21.

G.R.C. It is. “I will make him an helpmate”, and yet it is Jehovah *Elohim* who is speaking.

Ques. When you say that God is one, have you in mind that that is something more than what we refer to as unity?

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. We can speak of the unity of the saints; we are set together in unity, but “God is one” is a stronger expression. It is one-ness of Being, as I understand it.

Rem. So that it never has in it the thought of anything to be arrived at, it is always there.

J.McK. It is important to bear in mind that each Person of the Godhead is fully and absolutely God, in Himself?

He is not in that sense dependent, so to speak; They are there, in self-existence, as one God?

G.R.C. And I think while we can distinguish we cannot separate Deity. If the Son was here it was *God* manifest in flesh; if the Spirit is dwelling in the saints, they are *God's* habitation in the Spirit.

Ques. What is the link between the scripture "Let us make man", and Christ? How does it apply?

G.R.C. I would not apply it to Christ. I would not apply the word "make" to Christ, but rather that God was bringing in an order of being according to His purpose. He had previously created angels but He was not making *man* then. But all was in view of the incarnation. The Lord Jesus was born of a woman. God was making the order of being in which in due time the Son would take His place, but as the Second Man, out of heaven.

H.F.N. The word referring to the Lord is that "he became flesh", is it not?

G.R.C. Yes, "taking his place in the likeness of men".

W.W.S. Although He formed no part of the creation, yet in grace transcending He came into it and took a place in relation to it?

G.R.C. That is quite true, but then the greatness of this, do you not think, is that God was making an order of being in view of Christ becoming incarnate. God was preparing the way, as it were.

Ques. I would like to ask what is involved in the words of the Lord Jesus, "a body hast thou prepared me". I wondered whether God had not something to do with the body that the Lord Jesus took?

G.R.C. Quite so. I think it is good to bring that out, and it is another case where it is important to keep to the word of scripture, "a body hast thou *prepared* me". We can safely go as far as that, that a body was prepared for the Lord Jesus, and a body is essential; angels have not bodies, they are spirits. For headship, for image, a body is essential.

Rem. I thought that was what was in your mind in the great thought of man before God.

G.R.C. Quite so. Man is a tri-partite being—spirit, soul and body; and the Lord Jesus has come into man-

hood and scripture speaks of His spirit, His soul, and His body. In John 12 it says, "Now is my soul troubled"; and in John 13 it says, "Jesus was troubled in spirit"; and He also says, "my body for you". Jesus is very man although He is very God; but it says, "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*", showing the necessity for a body.

J.McK. In 2 Corinthians 4 the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ.

G.R.C. That necessitates a body.

J.A.P. Would the thought of likeness need the Son, the thought of likeness perhaps referring to the moral character of God, as love?

G.R.C. Well, the idea of likeness is never attached to Christ in scripture, and Mr. Darby says that is because He *is* God. It would not be right to say that Jesus was in the likeness of God, because He *is God*, and therefore in the fullest measure He must be the image of God, because He is God. It would be derogatory to say that He was in the likeness of God.

J.A.P. I meant that that feature of God would have to be expressed in Him, One who knew Him.

G.R.C. Quite so, and I think in us the family side is essential as underlying our part with Christ in headship. Likeness, I believe, is connected with the thought of origin, and children and those who form the assembly are all of Christ's order. According to this passage, "male and female created he them". The woman is there, typical of the assembly. The assembly is composed of those who have the divine likeness.

E.R.F. You made reference just now to the thought of fulness. Is it in mind that the fulness should be displayed through this great matter of headship?

G.R.C. It says, "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*". That brings out the greatness of the head.

Ques. Would these words "by him" and "for him" support the idea of speaking of Persons in the Godhead?—"by him were created all things".

G.R.C. I think they do. We have to distinguish between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and the word "person" helps in this. We can distinguish the activities

of the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and scripture speaks of sovereign will in connection with the operations of each. Nevertheless "God is one", and I think that refers to the one-ness of the Supreme Being.

Ques. Would you carry your remarks a little further as to how we can distinguish and not separate? How does that work out in our approach?

G.R.C. As to our approach, our access to the Father is through the Son and in the Spirit. That is, there would be no approach if we separated the Persons of the Godhead, for we need the Son and the Spirit to have access to the Father, and thus we dwell in God, and God in us. There are *many* other scriptures—for instance, "Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2: 23); and, "He that abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). One could not have the Father and the Son without the Spirit.

H.F.N. If we might get a little clearer, would you say that in 1 Corinthians 15: 28 the expression "God may be all in all" would involve Father, Son and Holy Spirit? I notice Mr. Darby, in the introduction to the Bible, brings in a most wonderful note of worship and then says, "God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". Also does not Ephesians 3: 21—"to him be glory in the assembly"—involve Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

G.R.C. I *fully* agree.

H.F.N. So that there is liberty to address each Divine Person?

G.R.C. Certainly. God is One in nature and Essential Being; but this does not alter the fact that we can and must distinguish the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. If we think of God from His own side, making Himself known, and bringing us before Him for His pleasure, we know God in revelation and relationship in the Father, expressed and manifested in the Son and dwelling in us by the Spirit. But it is one God. On the other hand, if we think of divine operations day by day in the testimonial sphere, then we know the Father as our God, the Son as our Lord and the Spirit as the Comforter. But we never lose sight of the fact that the Son and the Spirit are one with the Father in Essential Being.

J.McK. Would you say that it is in the economy and in divine operations that there is that which can be distinguished, but as in Deity they are One, inseparably One?

G.R.C. Quite so. Therefore there is such a thing as response to God and worshipping of God without distinguishing Persons—God the Supreme One. But then we know Him in revelation and relationship in the Father, expressed in the Son, and dwelling in us by the Spirit, but the whole matter is *God*; it is thus that *God* is known. And the God who is known in that way, in whom we dwell, and He in us, is the God who inhabits eternity. Behind all that has been made known, there is the fact of Himself, in His own supremacy, the supremacy of His own Being, dwelling in light unapproachable.

H.F.N. So that you come to the realm of what we so often speak of as inscrutable.

G.R.C. And the sense of that greatly promotes worship.

Ques. Do you distinguish between “God is one” and the one-ness that the Lord speaks of in John 17?

G.R.C. I believe one underlies the other. My impression is that the one-ness of Deity underlies those statements of the Lord in John’s gospel. While, of course, there is the fact which flows from it, that as Man here, the Son, He was in every way one with His Father, yet I believe underlying all was the one-ness of Deity. It was impossible for it to be otherwise because of the one-ness of Deity.

F.D.W. Would Philip’s enquiring mind unwittingly bring in, or seek to bring in, separation when he said, “Show us the Father”, whereas the Lord’s reply is, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”?

G.R.C. Quite so. “Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip?”; and earlier, “If ye had known me, ye would have known also my Father, and henceforth ye know him and have seen him”; and again “Believest thou not that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me?”

J.McK. As to headship, does it all bear upon mediatorship; the blessedness of what God is could only stand related to creation as in a mediator?

G.R.C. The headship of God is the great end in view. But the headship of God having been set aside in the creation, it is secured beyond any further challenge

through the coming in of the Lord Jesus and through His headship as Man, and, we may say, through Christ and the assembly. Thus the headship of God is to be secured in the universe in a way that will be for ever beyond all challenge.

W.B.H. Is it remarkable that David in 1 Chronicles 29 should, in some way, voice what you are now saying, when he says, "Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendour, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is thine: thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom, and thou art exalted as Head above all; and riches and glory are of thee"?

G.R.C. I think it illustrates what is in mind. David was the king and the title 'the king' is closely allied to headship. It suggests the glory and splendour attaching to the position. In human affairs the king is the head of the state, and Peter speaks of "the king as supreme". The king *must* be supreme, and therefore the king is always head, although kingship no doubt stresses the splendour and power of the position, while headship emphasises moral features and influence proper to it. But the king is the head; and in 1 Chronicles 29 David, as typical of Christ, having brought all under his own influence and sway as head, then makes way for the headship of God—"thou art exalted as head above all".

H.F.N. Is one of the initial thoughts in headship the great thought of recovery?

G.R.C. That is because sin has come in. But would you say that the abstract truth of headship lies outside of the sin question?

H.F.N. Exactly.

G.R.C. Thus Genesis 1 is before sin came in. Apart altogether from the question of sin, if the invisible God was to be known He needed an image, and according to His eternal purpose man was to be His image; it was not an angelic being, but *man*. It required the coming into manhood of the Lord Jesus to fill this out, for Adam was just a figure. But then sin having come in, man's recovery had to be taken up by the Lord Jesus, and Romans 5 speaks of that. Sin having come in, there must be a moral basis laid for Him to take up headship. Were God's thoughts as to man and His eternal purpose to fail? They

have not failed, because the Lord Jesus has come in, as the One Man of Romans 5, to lay a moral foundation for His headship.

H.F.N. Has it not often been said that in Romans headship is introduced on a moral basis, in Colossians on a personal basis, and in Ephesians on an official basis? In that connection will you make more clear the link in your mind between our three scriptures?

G.R.C. Genesis 1 makes clear that the purpose of God in the matter is connected with man, "Let us make man". It is not a question of angels—it is in man that God is to be represented, and it is man who is to have the place of head, and in that connection it is male and female, so that the assembly comes into the matter—"let them have dominion". It is in Christ and the assembly that headship is to be seen; Christ is head over all things, of course, "head over all things to the assembly". Nevertheless the assembly shares in the dominion. In Romans the Lord Jesus is not called head, and I think we have to note that. It seems to me rather the moral foundation that He laid in order to take up His place as head. He is head by divine right because of His Person, but then in wondrous grace He came in on the line of the "one righteousness" and "the obedience of the one" in contrast with Adam. He was obedient unto death; and through that moral basis being laid, God's thoughts for man have in no way failed. God is free to carry out all His thoughts as to man; He is free to secure the assembly, so that the man and the woman should be in the place of headship according to the eternal purpose. Then 1 Corinthians 11 sets out the general principles of headship, whether we apply it to men and women down here, as the scripture does primarily, or whether we apply it to Christ and the assembly. "Christ is the head of every man, but the woman's head is the man, and Christ's head God." Man is God's image and glory, and the woman is the glory of the man. I think there you get the general principles set out.

Ques. Would you say a further word in relation to likeness, and how the thought of likeness is carried forward? You will remember that it is brought in in the fifth chapter after sin has come in and seems to be carried forward in the sense of generation?

G.R.C. I should say that is right, and I think in the full sense of generation it is connected with the children of God. It involves our generation as born of God; that is how the likeness is secured. John's epistle shows that those born of God are like God in righteousness and purity and love. The likeness is there and the assembly is composed of such persons and is therefore fitted to be with Christ as His counterpart in the headship.

Ques. Would you say why you think the word 'likeness' is left out in Genesis 1 : 27?

G.R.C. Because I think the primary thought is image. If the image is to be true, likeness is essential. But it is not said of Christ that He was in the likeness of God, because *He is God*, and therefore in manhood He must be the image of God, but with the saints, likeness has to be brought about. The primary thought in headship is image.

Ques. Is image the thought of representation?

G.R.C. Yes, God is invisible. He can only be known in His creation through One who represents Him; He will be known through Christ and the assembly.

H.F.N. Would it be right to say that when you come to the great question of recovery in regard to image and likeness God will not put the stamp of His image on anything that is not like Himself? So that, as you say, you could not refer to the thought of likeness in regard to the Lord, *He is God*.

G.R.C. In human affairs a representative may be a representative of a monarch and yet be quite unlike him. But that is not the divine thought. Fallen man remains as having been created in the image of God, but he is no longer a true image because the likeness is lost.

H.F.N. Exactly.

J.P.H. So it says in Philippians 2, "irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life". Is that children and likeness?

G.R.C. I think it is.

H.F.N. Would it be right to link the thought of likeness with children, whereas image would more bear on our place as sons?

G.R.C. I think that is right. We are to be conformed to the image of God's son. And God's Son is the One whom God has made head—*He* is the image of God.

## READING (2)

Ephesians 1: 3-10, 20-23; 3: 8-19

J.F.G. Would you be free to say briefly what you understand to be the difference between lordship and headship?

G.R.C. The distinction is an important one and is made by Peter in his initial address in Acts when he says, "God has made him, this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ." I think lordship implies supreme authority. A king, in human affairs, is known as "Sovereign Lord" in official documents, and that is right, for a king *is* Sovereign Lord. But then he is also head, he is head of the state; so that kingship includes both lordship and headship. I think lordship in Christ implies supreme authority and also power to subjugate, including what is military, whereas headship properly requires a scene where evil is no longer occurrent to be seen in its full exercise. God's thought of a king, as seen in David, is that he is the Beloved—his name means that. So that in kingship according to God the king is not only a lord but he is the Beloved, and he therefore rules in the affections of his people, and as ruling in their affections he has great influence. He thus gives direction, impulse and character to the whole scene over which he is head. I think if we apply that to Christ, in whom alone the idea is fully seen, it is very wonderful. He is spoken of in this chapter as the Beloved, not simply God's Beloved, but He is *the* Beloved. It will be no arbitrary matter for things to be headed up in Christ. Because He is *the* Beloved, He will be the centre of all affection, and therefore all who come under His headship will be exceedingly sensitive to His impulse and direction; all will, as it were, move in the current of His thoughts and His mind.

This afternoon we may get help in a special way as to headship as seen in Christ, keeping in mind the title *the Christ*, which is the characteristic title in this epistle. The title "Son of God" is used once, but the title "*the Christ*" is used something like nineteen times in Ephesians. It implies His place as head and the royalty and splendour that attach to it, and thus includes kingship. It answers to "the Lord's Anointed" of the Old Testament, only that whereas the kingship and headship of the Lord's Anointed of the Old Testament was limited to Israel and, in some measure, the nations around, the kingship and headship of the One who is in the full sense God's Anointed — "*the Christ*" — extends to all things, "the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1: 10). God has purposed this in Himself, "according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ". The title "the Christ" occurs again in verses 20 and 21, where it says that God has "set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named". Think of the splendour of this position. It is the highest office in the universe. The title "the *Son*" refers to a relationship, but the title "*the Christ*" to an office.

F.D.W. So that does "the Christ" involve choice?

G.R.C. It does; according to the scripture, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul has found its delight. I will put my Spirit upon him" (Matt. 12: 18). That is the Christ. God has put His Spirit upon Him; He is the Anointed, and He is anointed because He is God's beloved.

N.K.McL. Does the title "the Christ" in the Ephesian epistle always refer to Christ personally?

G.R.C. I think so. It is possible in verse 10, by inference, to include the assembly, because we know that the assembly is with Him in the headship; but I think generally the title "the Christ" refers to Christ personally. But then His body is referred to, and He is viewed as united to the assembly in verses 22 and 23, "head over all things to the assembly, which is his body".

J.McK. Does the trend of headship in this epistle bear

on what accumulates Godward, that is, the gathering up of all that is effected through grace for the divine glory; whereas in Colossians is it headship as imparting wealth and wisdom and glory to the saints?

G.R.C. It is important to see that one great end in view in Ephesians is the gathering up of the response of the whole universe to *God*, and for *that* headship is necessary. The "administration of the fulness of times" refers to the world to come as the time when the fulness of every other time is displayed. A time is what we often call a dispensation. Out of every dispensation God has secured fruit; He has secured a family, and He is shortly to bring in the fulness of times. The fulness in that connection means that the harvest of each time or dispensation is displayed. God will display what He has secured from every dispensation, and that involves families; there will be families in heaven and on earth. But we have to bear in mind that the family idea by itself is not sufficient to secure adequately the whole scene in service and praise to God as God. For that we need headship. We need the family side of things to give liberty and privilege and enjoyment, but when we come to the service of God in His greatness, what is due to Him as God, and the gathering up of all in response to God, we need headship.

J.McK. You mean that headship is not simply a family idea—it includes what is official and influential?

G.R.C. Yes.

Ques. Is it an eternal thought?

G.R.C. It is. Also the families that are displayed in the administration of the fulness of times are carried over into eternity. A change has to take place with some, of course, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom", but what God has secured for Himself from every age will be displayed and then carried over into eternity. The feast of tabernacles which typifies the fulness of times has seven days, and then an eighth day. The seven days refer to the world to come, whereas the eighth day, "the last, the great day of the feast", would link with the eternal state. The feast of tabernacles was celebrated when all the harvest was gathered in, and in the fulness of times all the harvest will have been gathered in, and God will display the great results, which are eternal.

Ques. Does lordship go into eternity?

G.R.C. I think abstractly lordship must always be there, but I do not think the active exercise of lordship belongs to eternity. The Lord Jesus will have put down *all* authority, He will have dealt with every enemy, so that I do not think the active exercise of lordship belongs to the eternal scene, whereas the exercise of headship must go right through.

H.F.N. There will be no necessity for the exercise of lordship in eternity. Do we not get an illustration of the contrast between lordship and headship in the books of Samuel and Chronicles? In Samuel does David represent the great thought of lordship and the establishment of the kingdom and the overthrowing of every adverse power, and then does Chronicles bring in the great realm of the service of God in which David shines in such peculiar lustre in headship?

G.R.C. That is very helpful. In Samuel David is dealing with enemies; it is subjugation and military exploits which link with lordship. But is not all in view of David securing a scene so under his influence as the beloved, where all are so responsive to him and where he is so enshrined in the affections of the whole nation, that they are brought entirely into line with his own desires and impulses towards God?

Ques. Is that what Christ as head will do—bring out a universe for God?

G.R.C. That is exactly what is in mind. He says, "My God", and it is a question of what the perfect Man will do for His God.

W.W. In Solomon's day there was neither enemy nor evil occurrent.

G.R.C. That is the kind of domain where headship is seen in its true exercise. There is nothing to hinder affection flowing freely, so that the whole realm is in the flow, and under the influence of, the affections of the head.

Ques. Is subjection an eternal thought?

G.R.C. Yes, because headship involves subjection. Lordship subjugates in view of producing a state of subjection. It is in a state of subjection through affection that headship operates.

Ques. Does the day of the Lord precede the day of Christ?

G.R.C. The day of the Lord is an extended period. I think it begins with the initial judgments prior to the millennium; it includes the millennium, because the power of lordship will then hold evil in check; and it continues after the millennial day until the last enemy is destroyed. So that Peter speaks of the day of the Lord, without any reference to the millennial day, as ushering in the day of God. It is remarkable that Peter closes his ministry with the day of God, the headship of God, before his soul in such a manner that he does not even mention the millennial day. He speaks of the day of the Lord as one great matter of subjugation with a view to the bringing in of the day of God. But then, as you say, included in that period there is the millennial period which is spoken of here as "the administration of the fulness of times". It is called elsewhere the day of Christ, when Christ will reign without evil or enemy hindering.

H.F.N. How does the will of God bear upon this great thought of headship? We have often noted "the good pleasure of his will" (verse 5), and then "the mystery of his will" (verse 9), and then "the counsel of his own will" (verse 11). Is all in view of eternity and the bringing in of headship?

G.R.C. I think so; and we are specially engaged now with "the mystery of his will". We need to take account of that expression. "The good pleasure of his will" relates to sonship, but then God would have His sons intelligent, and the mystery involves intelligence. It says, "the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself". God would have us intelligent as to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself as to the Christ.

H.F.N. The will of God here involves the whole spiritual universe, does it not?

G.R.C. It does, and I think we should seek to understand God's good pleasure in this connection. He delights that His Son should have this great official position, the greatest position in the universe. He delights to put honours upon the Son; He has set a crown of pure gold upon His head, He has crowned Him with glory and

honour. In Psalm 2 we have "Thou art my Son"; and "I have anointed my king". It is the good pleasure of God that the whole universe should centre in the Son, honoured in this way as His Christ.

H.F.N. According to the good pleasure of His will He has taken us into favour in the Beloved, but the mystery of His will is to gather everything up in Christ as the head.

G.R.C. That is what we need to lay hold of: the place He has given to Christ, because He loves Him. He is the Son, the Beloved, and it has been the greatest joy to the heart of God to set Him in the centre of a vast universe, in a most glorious way in royal splendour, as the Object of universal affection, influencing all. What a fit setting for such a Person!

J.McK. Headship in Christ is a prime matter with God, is it not? And would it not go back before any moral question had arisen? I was thinking of Proverbs 8, "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his ways." Is not this great plan of headship God's prime idea as to the whole universe gathered up in Christ?

G.R.C. I think so. Jehovah possessed wisdom in the beginning of His way, and wisdom has found expression in this great plan. His delight in a parental way is to have families, and that is essential. There could be no liberty in the universe apart from the family idea in sonship. But divine wisdom, I think, is seen in the fact that He has brought in Christ as head. It is the acme of divine wisdom to bring in Christ as head, so that all the saved families have One to look to under whose direction they can take their place in the service of God. We are sons, and every family will know sonship in measure, and sons would love to serve God. But how are we to serve Him? We need to be under a head, under One who can give us impulse, direction, guidance and wisdom in the service of God—One who knows fully what is suitable to God as God.

H.F.N. Is God teaching us all the secrets that belong to this vast system that is going to be introduced under the headship of Christ?

G.R.C. The mystery involves the secrets of God's will. No greater honour could have been bestowed upon us than that God should desire to communicate to us His

most cherished thoughts and plans, and that is what is involved in "the mystery of his will".

E.J.B. In this lavish setting it says, "which he has caused to *abound* towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us". He has done it in a lavish way.

G.R.C. He has. We are His sons and He wants us to be thoroughly intelligent in His mind. But then, in spite of His abounding towards us, how little we have taken it in, how little we are marked by all wisdom and intelligence so as to understand the divine plan.

H.F.N. The One who is the very centre of the vast system of glory is to dwell in our hearts by faith. This would give us entrance into it, would it not?

G.R.C. Chapter 3, verse 8, speaks of "the unsearchable riches of the Christ"; and then Paul prays that the Father would give us, "according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man, that *the Christ* may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". Have we taken enough note of the apostle's desire, and evidently the Father's desire, that *the Christ*—that is to say, the Lord Jesus as the glorified head in all the splendours attaching to the office He holds—that *He* in that character, should dwell in our hearts by faith.

H.B. Does the vast system of glory open out to us as the Christ is in our hearts? We get the Spirit of His Son whereby we cry "Abba, Father", but then the Father's Spirit is to magnify the Christ in our hearts, so that the whole scene of glory might be opened up before us.

G.R.C. Do you think we have understood that much?

H.B. It would be a good thing if we did more through this meeting.

G.R.C. Do you think we realise that the Father, according to the riches of His glory, would strengthen us by His Spirit in order that we might apprehend the glory that He has put upon His Son in giving Him this great position as the Christ? The Father delights in Him, He has heaped honours upon Him and made Him the centre of the whole system because He is worthy, and the Father would strengthen us that we might apprehend Him as the head of that system.

T.W.C. Is the ark in the tabernacle a type of Christ, especially as dwelling in our hearts by faith, as the centre of the great divine system which the tabernacle typifies?

G.R.C. Just so. I think that type fills out the expression in a large measure. The ark is the centre of the system as giving character to all. But then I believe also that Solomon is a type of the Christ and that both types are needed. It speaks of the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, and that suggests Christ *as active*. The ark suggests Christ as head in a fixed position as giving character to the whole scene, and as the One who has laid the basis by way of the mercy-seat for the whole scene to exist; but then the *active* element of headship is seen in Solomon in the immense activity that marked him, and David too, viewing them together as a type.

H.F.N. The ark was brought into the most holy place and the staves were withdrawn. Is that like Ephesians 3—the great end in view in Paul's ministry—that the Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and the staves withdrawn?

G.R.C. I think so. But then Solomon becomes active, to secure in full measure the results for God, and it needs *active* love to secure the full results.

F.D.W. Is Paul one who was serving in the light of a system already in existence, and are we not often hindered in putting these truths off to the future?

G.R.C. I am glad you refer to that. What we have read in chapter 1 is future literally, but if we do not anticipate it in the power of the Spirit the service of God will flag. So that He is already head over all things to the assembly.

Ques. What is involved in the heavens and the earth? Does it involve the whole universe?

G.R.C. It does. Adam was set over the earth, but the mystery of God's will is to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth; and then the angelic beings are brought in in their dignity here. When it speaks of angels in 1 Corinthians 11. 10 it would refer to them as sent out for service, and so the woman has authority on her head because of the angels—an important matter. If they understand the great subject of headship, sisters will have no difficulty about having authority on their head; because it is most important, in view of the place God has given man according to His

purpose, that we should rightly behave before the angels. I think that passage refers to them as sent out for service; but in Ephesians 1 : 21 they are referred to in their dignity, for they are great dignitaries, yet the Lord Jesus is above them all. What a place Man has! God has "set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named".

J.McK. Is chapter 3 the bearing of that upon us now? Is that why the word the mystery occurs? It will not be mystery in the future, will it?

G.R.C. Chapter 3 brings in the present in a specific way. Chapter 1 speaks of God's purpose which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times, but chapter 3 : 9-12 refers to God's eternal purpose about the *present time*, and it involves the working out of headship now in the assembly.

A.G.B. At what point in time would we begin to think of this great thought of the Christ? Does it go back to the incarnation, or to the anointing, or to His present place as the ascended Man?

G.R.C. At the incarnation the word is "a Saviour . . . who is Christ Jehovah" (Luke 2 : 11, footnote). Then there is the anointing at His baptism. God anointed His Son and so He moved out in testimony as the Anointed, the Christ, and is confessed as such in reply to the question, "Whom do ye say that I am", in each of the first three gospels. What a joy it must have been to God to see that great truth dawning on the hearts of the disciples! But I think He took up the position of the Christ officially in ascension, because Peter says, "God has made him, this Jesus . . ., both Lord and Christ." What do you say about that?

A.G.B. I am thankful for what you say—it has clarified the thought in one's mind. The "administration of the fulness of times" involves the Christ in His present position?

G.R.C. It does, because I think the Christ really involves the glorified Man. He was anointed here, and was the Christ, and apprehended as such by faith, but the full splendour and dignity of the position is seen in Jesus glorified.

Ques. And is it not in that setting that this word "gave him to be head over all things to the assembly" comes in? I wondered if you had something further to say about His headship in this relation.

G.R.C. It would link particularly with the second chapter of Genesis, do you not think? "I will make him a helpmate, his like."

Rem. But he was established head over all things prior to that, was He not?

G.R.C. That is true. The cattle and the beasts and the fowl, and so on, were brought to Adam and he proved his competency as head by the fact that he named them and whatever name he gave them that was its name. He had the wisdom to discern the functions and faculties of every creature brought to him, and then finally the woman is brought to him, and he names her. He says, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man." So the highest feature of Adam's intelligence lay in that he could name the woman and name her so accurately.

W.W.S. Is there not a peculiar delicacy of feeling and refinement of thought when you think of headship in relation to the woman?

G.R.C. There is. How capable the Lord Jesus is of assessing the functional value of every family and every individual in the universe of God, angelic beings too, and of influencing all and using all in the service of God, but especially so as regards the assembly; as regards her, His headship has a peculiar character.

H.F.N. So that the assembly is associated with the Christ in His headship and administration.

G.R.C. I think so, and do you not think that Christ's headship operates, if one might use the expression, downward and upward? It operates downward in the sense that the light of God and the administration connected with His glory is maintained in the universe through Christ and the assembly, and upward in the response that accrues through Him to God?

J.P.H. To what extent is Ephesians 1: 22-23 touched by us now?

G.R.C. Well, I do not think we can limit the extent to which it may be touched now, because the Spirit is here,

and the union of Christ and the assembly is, as I understand it, an already existing fact. Things are viewed here as already done. It says that God *set* Him down at His right hand, and has put all things under His feet, and *gave* Him to be head over all things to the assembly.

H.B. Would you say a word on being enlightened in the eyes of your heart in chapter 1 and then the Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts in chapter 3.

G.R.C. The first is enlightenment, but would not the Father use that to make way for the Christ Himself to dwell in our hearts?

H.B. It says "that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints". Do we need all the saints for this?

G.R.C. We need all the saints in our affections.

H.B. So that it would have a bearing on our relations with one another?

G.R.C. It would.

H.F.N. What you were saying is of great importance. Chapter 1 is a matter of light, but then do we not need the prayer of chapter 3 to give us a present entrance into it? The first chapter is from the divine standpoint and is opening up the great realm of purpose, but when we come to the third chapter it is the formation of a vessel that is really to enter into it and display it eternally. Is that right?

G.R.C. That is very helpful. "Enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling." Do you not think that the calling includes not only sonship but also the church's union with Christ? I think if we limit the calling of God to sonship we fall short of the divine mind. I believe the hope of God's calling is sonship—"out of Egypt have I called my son"—but it also includes that we are called to have part in the assembly. The very word assembly means 'called out', it is a called-out company. So that we are called to sonship, which gives us liberty, but also to have part, a *functional part*, in this great vessel which God has called out and which is united to Christ. That is included in the hope of His calling. I think if we had the light of that it would lay the basis for Ephesians 3.

H.F.N. You were making a remark, which I think was most valuable, about the double thought of headship,

both looking down, and then in relation to God. Would you say a further word as to this?

G.R.C. In Genesis 1 and 2 the man and the woman were set over the creation to shed the light of God upon it, and Ephesians 1: 22-23 corresponds with this in an anti-typical way. "Him who fills all in all" would refer *primarily* to the downward functions of headship. But I think chapter 3: 8-12 have in view not only the administration of divine wisdom and wealth downward but also response upward. It is the Solomon aspect of headship. The vessel which is the bride of Christ is also the habitation of God, for He dwells in a vessel where Christ is enshrined. In such a vessel He finds His rest, and in it His service proceeds. So the type of the assembly under Solomon merges in the house and in those who had part in the service of the house under his headship. These verses in Ephesians 3 have that in mind. It speaks of "the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ", and where can we find a type of that in scripture other than in Solomon? 1 Kings 4 gives the wealth of wisdom and other things that were under his hand for the people: "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry"; and it goes on to say, "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding and largeness of heart, as the sand that is on the seashore." And then it says that he spoke of a vast range of things. All this was downward for the people, to fill them. But later there is the upward flow, and Solomon's wisdom is seen in ordering things in the way of response.

E.R.S. Is that why height is the last measurement referred to in Ephesians 3: 18?

G.R.C. I think it would bear on this, because the queen of Sheba saw *his ascent*. She saw all the wisdom of Solomon and finally his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah, and then it says there was no more spirit in her. Think of the king, the head, going up to the house of Jehovah. It would set in motion the whole service of the house which was under his impulse and direction, and you can understand there was no more spirit left in the queen of Sheba. She was an earthly principality looking on, and there was no more spirit left in her; but in

Ephesians 3 heavenly principalities are looking on at the service proceeding in a heavenly vessel.

H.F.N. So that in relation to Solomon does his wisdom and headship produce on the one hand the virtuous woman, the woman of worth, and on the other, as you say, the service of God really in its eternal character?

G.R.C. I think it does. I believe the acme of divine wisdom typically is seen in the way David and Solomon ordered the service of God. Would you say that?

H.F.N. I would indeed.

Ques. Why is the prayer addressed to the Father of every family? Is that an eternal setting?

G.R.C. The family thought is eternal.

Ques. I was wondering if it was your thought that our hearts must be established in the family setting before we could attain to the thought of God as the Head over all?

G.R.C. I think that is a most important principle to keep in mind. The family setting is essential; but the family setting does not exactly involve service. A king's sons at home with him are not thinking of service; but when it comes to matters of state and of the public honour due to the king, then in the liberty of sonship they take up service. They can render honour and homage to the king in a way no other subjects can because they know him in the inside place in intimacy. Thus family affections underlie the service of God.

A.G. Does the Father's spirit come in in chapter 3 to help us not only to see the ascent as did the queen of Sheba but to take it ourselves?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. In chapter 1 sonship comes first, and then the mystery of God's will as to headship, and in chapter 3 the Father, who has named every family, would now strengthen the hearts of those who form the assembly to understand headship, *the Christ* dwelling in our hearts by faith, so that we might be fitted for the magnificence of divine service. As sons we would delight to be in it; but to be equipped and furnished for it we need to be under the headship of Christ.

F.C.E. In chapter 2 we have access to the Father, and in chapter 3 access to God. What is the difference?

G.R.C. Access to the Father in chapter 2 is the inner

side of privilege. Service is not so much in mind there, as far as one sees. But the theme of chapter 3 generally is *God*; it is "the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God, who has created all things, in order that *now* to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages". *That is God's purpose about the present time*. Let us not forget that God has a purpose about the present time, "according to the purpose of the ages, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by the faith of him". It does not say who the access is to—it is left open. It is a question of how far our spirituality will enable us to go. It does not say the Father here, but it adds "boldness" because *God* is the theme, and you need boldness in approaching God, the Supreme Being. But we have boldness, and we have access with confidence by the faith of Him. Who can limit what that access may mean in the Spirit's power, under the true Solomon?

Rem. Whilst we ourselves are in time, if we reach, through the headship of Christ and the power of the Spirit, God in His habitation, do we touch eternity?

G.R.C. We arrive at eternal conditions in our spirits in the power of the Holy Spirit.

R.G.H. "Filled (even) to all the fulness of God." Would you mind saying how far that would go?

G.R.C. Well, I could not say how far it would go, because the fulness of God is like an ocean. You put a vessel into the ocean and the vessel is filled, but the vessel does not contain the ocean; nevertheless we can say the ocean is in the vessel, but not all of it. I do not think we can place limits upon it.

J.McK. So that perhaps the question to raise is, What is our capacity?

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. What is our capacity and spirituality?

J.McK. I was wondering whether you are not emphasising to us the particular value of this chapter, for God has delight in this great phase of the truth. Are we not inclined to look on to what is final and ultimate in actuality instead of seeing that in the wisdom of God this period of time

has a lustre peculiar to itself, when the administration of the mystery of the Christ shines by way of the Spirit?

G.R.C. I believe that verses 8–12 of this chapter 3 are some of the most important in scripture, and if anyone here does not know them off by heart I hope he will learn them today. Many learn the prayer, but do not learn what the apostle was praying about. These are the verses he was praying about, because it is a question of God's purpose as to the present moment, and, if we miss it, it is missed for ever. It is an urgent matter that these verses should be taken up and understood and worked out, and that, of course, involves our relations with one another. The administration of the mystery with a view to God's wisdom being manifested in the assembly is a most testing thing, because it begins with our relations with one another. "There is one body and one Spirit." The body is referred to before the Spirit in that passage, and unless our "body" relations are right, we shall get no further.

H.B. So that chapter 4 begins with one another and finishes with one another, as though the things must be held on those lines?

G.R.C. That is a very good and practical remark. Chapter 4 is so essential if we are to know anything of these verses in chapter 3.

J.F.G. Why did you say just now we need boldness in relation to God?

G.R.C. Because God is the Supreme Being, supreme in majesty. What do you think? I am only noticing that scripture puts in the word boldness there, "in whom we have boldness". It also comes in Hebrews, where God in His greatness is presented.

A.G.B. Is it not remarkable in that regard that the love of the Christ is left so late before reference is made to it? It would seem that some apprehension of the extent and vastness of the love of the Christ, operating in relation to these great thoughts that are Godward, should have a place in our souls.

G.R.C. Exactly. I think what you say is right, because the love of the Christ is one love. We are apt to think of the love of the Christ as relative to the assembly only, but the love of the Christ is one great and perfect love, *the love of a perfect Man*. He is God, of course, but it is the love

of a perfect Man which flows in every direction—"I love my master, my wife, and my children"—the love of the Christ. Is that right?

A.G.B. Yes, that is just what I had in my mind.

G.R.C. And so from that angle it could not be brought out till this point, because now you have got space to indicate the scope and extent of the activities of the love of the Christ. It flows in every direction. It fills out the length and breadth and depth and height.

J.A.P. Could I ask one question? You would not suggest that what you are referring to in the third chapter is greater than chapter 2: 18, would you, because in the fourth chapter we have definitely, "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in us all".

G.R.C. These things are complementary, they run on together. The Father's house is the place of privilege and enjoyment. It is a question of a place prepared for us, what the Father has done for us. He has done the best for us, and we have access to the Father. But complementary to this there is the assembly as the vessel of divine service, which brings in the thought of what is *due to God in His greatness*. The one is necessary for the other.

Ques. Is the order of John 20 to be borne in mind in relation to that, "My Father, and your Father . . . my God, and your God"?

G.R.C. Yes, it is. "My Father, and your Father" is in view of our being able to be with the Lord Jesus as Man in the service of His God. Is that what you have in mind?

Rem. That is what I had in mind: not to distinguish in greatness but in order.

G.R.C. That is right.

### READING (3)

Colossians 1: 12-18; 2: 9-10. Ephesians 5: 25-32.

Genesis 2: 18, 21-24

G.R.C. We come now in this reading to what is special: that is, Christ's headship of the assembly, which is a much more sensitive and delicate and remarkable matter than

His headship over all things. I thought we might be led to consider what Christ is to the assembly in Colossians, where it says, "*He* is the head of the body, the assembly." What a head the assembly has! And then in Ephesians 5 and Genesis 2 what the assembly is to Christ; what she is on account of her origin and what she is to Him as His helpmate, His like. Perhaps we have little understood all the reasons that govern Christ's love for the assembly.

But, to begin with, it is a question of the greatness and pre-eminence of the One who is the head. The passage we have read brings out His pre-eminence in the Father's affections as the Son of the Father's love, and His pre-eminence as the firstborn of all creation. As coming into manhood, He must rank as firstborn, because all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all. These are marvellous statements as to the Person of Christ, and the assembly has an appreciation of Him in every feature of His greatness.

E.J.F. Could you make a general remark as to the difference you see between what you are referring to now as to Christ as the head of the body, and what we were looking at yesterday in the end of Ephesians 1.

G.R.C. You are thinking of the expression "head over all things to the assembly, which is His body"? Well, I think if you view Christ and the assembly by themselves, then He is the head *of* the body the assembly. It is like a husband and wife, or a king and queen, viewed by themselves. But if you view them in relation to the whole realm that comes under the Christ, then He is head over all things *to* the assembly, because she is with Him in the headship. To use the illustration of a king and queen: they are together in the headship, but the queen would say, "My husband is head over all things to me." Does that help, do you think?

E.J.F. You are meaning that the official position is a much more general and universal one?

G.R.C. In Ephesians 1 Christ and the assembly are viewed in relation to the whole realm over which Christ is head. He is head over all things, and the assembly recognises that, but then viewed in that position she is with Him in the headship. He is head over all things to her, but to the lower creation, as it were, she is with Him

in the headship. But that does not alter the truth that, viewed by themselves, He is the head of the assembly (Eph. 5: 23).

N.K.McL. Is headship in Colossians more personal, and in Ephesians 1 more official?

G.R.C. That is true, so that Colossians brings out, does it not, the personal greatness of Christ, whereas, as you say, Ephesians 1 is rather His official greatness. It is the greatness of the office or position in which God has placed Him and in which the assembly is with Him in glory. In His personal greatness He is unique and alone, yet it is *such* a Person who is head of the body, the assembly.

J.P.H. Does Ephesians 1 suppose union having taken place?

G.R.C. I think it does. Would you say why you think that?

J.P.H. Because she is sharing the headship with Him.

G.R.C. I believe that is true, answering to Genesis 1: 26, where it says, "Let them have dominion", supposing that they are together in union.

A.S. Would you say how far "the kingdom of the Son of his love" bears on this?

G.R.C. I think the affections of the Father are drawn out because of the excellence of the Lord Jesus in His Manhood. The passage brings out the greatness of His Person, but then the assembly also appreciates, and, in some way, shares with the Father in His appreciation of the excellence and loveliness of the Son. He is the Son of the Father's love; every excellent feature proper to man in the mind of God is seen in its full display in the Lord Jesus, so that He is not only the Son of the Father's love but He is the Beloved of the assembly—He becomes our Beloved. Is that right, do you think?

A.S. Do you mean that the way in which the Father loves Him would affect us?

G.R.C. I think it does. The Father loves Him because He is so lovable. David and Solomon merge as a type here. Solomon represents the dignity and greatness of the relationship of son, then he is Jedidiah, the beloved of Jehovah. But of David God said, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." God made him that because he was so lovable, so worthy of such a

position. David means 'Beloved', and he is the one who qualifies for affection because of his loveliness, whereas Solomon, as it were, is born into the place of sonship typically; he is in it as a position. Both are true of Christ, of course: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"; but then it is true of Him too: "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth", because of His intrinsic perfections.

H.F.N. Would that be substantiated by the word in the fourth of Proverbs, "For I was a son unto my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother", and then it speaks in the Song of Solomon of the "crown with which his mother crowned him". Is this not, in principle, the assembly's crowning of Christ in response to the Father's love for Him? He will be crowned publicly, of course, by Israel, but I wonder whether this can be applied to the assembly's crowning of the Person of Christ?

G.R.C. One has wondered about that, and I am glad you confirm it. The assembly surely would have maternal feelings of affection for Christ as the great ideal. The Father has reached, we may say, His ideal in the Son of His love, and the assembly is in line with that; as you say, she would crown Him. It is hardly the bride's part to crown, is it, but there is, I suppose, that aspect of the assembly in which she is at liberty to crown Him.

Ques. Would you say the assembly has an understanding and an appreciation of all the greatness and glory of Christ as presented in this chapter?

G.R.C. That is just what I thought. The assembly can enter into it as no other company can.

J.A.P. Is it not very abrupt, the transition from what speaks of His deity here, "by him all things subsist", to "he is head of the body"? It goes on without any suggestion of manhood, in a way.

G.R.C. I think His manhood is involved in the title "Son of his love"; it is His manhood introduced in a most endearing way. Then, "in whom we have redemption" also involves His manhood; and again, "who is image of the invisible God" refers to His manhood. It is in *manhood* that He is the image of the invisible God. Then, as you say, it makes clear that this Person, who is the image of the invisible God, *is God*, bringing out some remarkable

statements, which the assembly would greatly appreciate as to the greatness of His Person. Then following all that it says, “and *he* is the head of the body, the assembly”.

A.G.B. And is it not important to notice that immediately headship is referred to it is said, “who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead”? Is it not in that setting alone that we can come into the gain of the headship of Christ?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right, and that is another great glory of His Person, that He is the beginning. Adam was not the beginning—the Lord Jesus is the beginning of everything for God; everything is patterned after Him. But then, He is firstborn from among the dead, as you say, because the old order had to be closed.

J.H. Would you mind saying a word about “firstborn”. We would like to understand it. Does it imply the chief place?

G.R.C. I think it is a matter of rank. He is the “image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation”. As coming into the creation, He ranks as firstborn.

H.F.N. Would the Psalm confirm it “I will make him firstborn, highest of the kings of the earth”?

G.R.C. Yes. It is a question of the rank that God gave to David; God gave him that rank. But according to this passage the Lord Jesus is firstborn in the right of His own Person.

F.D.W. Could you enlarge a little for us on the expression you have used twice as to Him coming into the creation? I have heard it questioned.

G.R.C. It is what we call the incarnation.

J.P.H. It does not mean that He was part of creation, we know that, do we not?

G.R.C. Quite so. He is the Creator.

W.W.S. Does He not come into the creation as Creator, and by reason of taking a place in creation He must rank as the firstborn of all creation?

G.R.C. I think so. He comes into the creation as *Man*, that is the great truth. He is the Creator, but He comes into the creation as *Man*, however we may choose to describe it. The great point is that He is a *Man*, and it is as a *Man* that He is the image of the invisible God, and firstborn of all creation.

H.F.N. It is not a question of time, but the whole emphasis is on the dignity of the Person.

E.J.B. How does this bear on "he is the head of the body, the assembly"? Is it to stress the greatness of the assembly that such an One as He is its head, or is it an added feature which can be attached to Him that He has this glory that He is head of the body, the assembly?

G.R.C. I would not shut out either of those thoughts, but what is mainly in mind now is to bring out the greatness of the One who is the head, that the assembly has *such* a head. How it draws out our affections to Him! He becomes indeed to us the pre-eminent One.

Ques. Would it be summarised in the question by the daughters of Jerusalem in the Song of Songs, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, thou fairest among women?" and then she proceeds to describe him personally.

G.R.C. That helps very much. Can *we* give an account of Him? The spouse in Canticles could give a detailed account of her beloved; she could answer the question in great detail. There is no other such Beloved as ours. He *is* ours, for He is the head of the body, the assembly. Our Beloved is the Father's Beloved, the Son of the Father's love; and He is a Divine Person, the One by whom and for whom all things were made; and, as having come into manhood, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; and as having come out of death, He is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead. In everything He has the pre-eminence, and the assembly is the vessel which understands His pre-eminence from every standpoint, and she loves Him in every feature of His greatness. She loves Him because of who He is in His Person; she loves Him because of His intrinsic worth and perfection in manhood; and she loves Him because the fulness dwells in Him. She also delights in the official glories that have been put upon Him according to Ephesians. The Beloved in the Song of Songs and in Psalm 45 is the king, and no one appreciates His kingship like the spouse.

H.F.N. Might we say in regard to what you were speaking of yesterday as to Romans 5 that we love Him for His moral glories; we love Him, according to Colossians, for

His personal glories; and then we love Him, according to Ephesians, for His official glories?

G.R.C. Very good. And it is a great contemplation, is it not: "My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I speak of my occupation touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45: 1 and footnote). We have an occupation which we shall never tire of all through eternity, occupation with our Beloved in all the features of His greatness.

Ques. It says in verse 19, "for in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". Would the fact that He is our head be a great help to us in coming to a knowledge of God, which we all desire, so as to be able to respond more to Him?

G.R.C. That is one of the greatest features of His headship, particularly as stated in chapter 2. In chapter 1 it is put in the past—in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell—with a view to the work of reconciliation, a remarkable statement; but in verse 9 of chapter 2 it says, "For in him *dwells* all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*." Again it is a *Man* who is before us—let us keep manhood in mind. His Deity is involved, but it is a *Man*—"For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*." If it was not *bodily* in a *Man* it would not be available to us.

J.P.H. And the note to chapter 2, to which you have referred, makes it clear that the fulness is towards us.

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*; and ye are filled full in him."

E.J.B. Is it not a wonderful thing that in the assembly's head dwells all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*?

G.R.C. It is a marvellous thing. How wealthy the assembly is! The fulness is in Him *bodily*, we might say, for our benefit. Not that we could ever fully compass it. *All* the fulness is beyond the compass of the creature. But nevertheless it is there for our appropriation in so far as we are able.

W.G.C. Could we have a word on the difference between the two references to the fulness in chapter 1 and chapter 2 of Colossians?

G.R.C. In chapter 1 the words "of the Godhead" are not there. "In him all the fulness was pleased to dwell." That is a remarkable statement, because it evidently refers

to the Lord Jesus when He was here in humiliation. It is a most profound statement. In chapter 2 it is in the present tense and the word "bodily" is added, because it is a question of our appropriation. We have to distinguish between the Godhead or Deity (the two words mean the same thing) and the fulness of the Deity. As to absolute Deity, the blessed and only Ruler dwells in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor is able to see. That is inscrutable. But the fulness of the Deity is something that can be taken account of and appropriated, *in measure*.

H.F.N. Does it help to see the first reference in scripture in regard to fulness? It is in Deuteronomy 33: 16, where it is spoken of as the fulness of the earth; it is all that has come out of the earth, is it not?

G.R.C. I think that greatly helps, because the earth is inscrutable as far as man is concerned. Many things that God has made are inscrutable. They are not inscrutable intrinsically, of course, like God Himself is, but they are inscrutable as far as man is concerned. The earth itself is beyond the explanation or the understanding of man, yet we can appropriate and enjoy the fulness of the earth. Even the fulness of the earth we cannot compass. We cannot explain even a blade of grass. But we can take account of what the earth brings forth, and appropriate and enjoy it. And so as to the Deity, all the fulness dwells in Christ bodily for our appropriation and enjoyment *as far as we are able*.

J.F.G. All that is to be known of God is there.

G.R.C. Yes, and I suppose far more than can be known by the creature. All the fulness is beyond anything the creature can fully compass. It is *all* there; but, nevertheless, it is there to be appropriated in so far as our spirituality will permit us.

H.B. Is not this one of the most wealthy and complete statements in the scripture? "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him."

G.R.C. I think so. Chapter 1 is not a question of our appropriation, it is the great fact that all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him and by Him to reconcile all things to itself. Through the work of Christ, all things are to be brought into the presence of the Fulness in such a manner

that the Fulness will be completely complacent. But chapter 2 is for our appropriation. "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are filled full in him."

H.F.N. So that it is something that has come within the reach of our appropriation. What is most glorious has come within our range, and when we think of the Lord's body, as the habitation and the temple and the dwelling-place of all this, it should bow our hearts in the most profound worship, should it not?

G.R.C. It should. What wealth the head bestows upon us; what wealth there is for us in the One who is our head! All the fulness of the Godhead! The wealth that is radiant in the One who is the head of the body, the assembly, is illimitable, and if we get the benefit of Him by way of accepting the truth of the body and allowing for the working of the body through the joints and bands and so on, we are going to be filled in this fulness.

H.F.N. A simple thought of fulness is what has come out of Deity, is it not? And one would like to ask: is it in view of our being brought into correspondence with Christ in what follows? There is circumcision, baptism, resurrection, and then finally that we are put into correspondence with Him through quickening. Is not all this fulness brought within our reach to bring about in this wonderful vessel a correspondence with our glorious head?

G.R.C. Chapter 1 is the *work of Christ* which sets us before the fulness in complacency, whereas chapter 2, as I understand it, is the *work of God* in our souls; we are risen with Him by faith of the working of God: "And you . . . he has quickened together with him." So that there is the work of Christ in chapter 1 which places us before the fulness in complacency, and there is the work of God in quickening power in chapter 2, both of which are to set us in the body in such a manner that we can draw on all the resources of the head. All the fulness becomes available as thus set in relation to the head through His work for us, and through the work of God in us. We are thus set together bodywise so that we can draw on this fulness and get the benefit of it.

Ques. Is Hebrews 1, "the expression of his substance", a similar thought?

G.R.C. It is a somewhat similar thought; He is the expression of His substance or essential Being. The Lord Jesus is the expression of the essential Being of God.

Ques. In this chapter it says the body is of Christ. Is there ability thus to draw upon this fulness?

G.R.C. That is it. Through the operations of God in quickening that Mr. N. has spoken of it is a true and actual fact that the body is of Christ, so that there is the ability to draw upon the resources of the head.

H.F.N. Would you mind saying more in regard to "the expression of his substance"? The note says, "'essential being', not 'person'." Now why does J.N.D. put it in that way?

G.R.C. Is it not a question of God—the Supreme Being? There is the distinguishing of the Persons, but then what has come out in the Persons is to give us some apprehension, as I understand it, of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being. The Son is thus said to be the expression of His essential Being, involving the inseparable One-ness of God.

A.G. Is the word "dwells" important, as over against "expression"? It is the same word in chapter 1. I thought it would suggest the restfulness of Deity, and our drawing from Him in His character as thus known.

G.R.C. Well, I think there must be the distinction you refer to. Here the fulness dwells bodily, and so it is to be drawn upon. In Hebrews it is "the expression". It is not so much a question there of the body drawing upon it, but what has come into expression.

H.F.N. If we are moved this afternoon in regard to occupation with, and holy contemplation of, this glorious Person, till He takes complete possession of our hearts, we shall see how the fulness has come within our range.

G.R.C. "Ye are filled full in him." Why should we not, as the body, be filled?

Ques. Why is it that He is spoken of here as the head of the body, the assembly, but it speaks of the body first of all? Could you say why that is so?

G.R.C. Because I think the body is the prominent thought in Colossians. The primary thought is not the dignity of the vessel—the assembly suggests that, so that in Ephesians 1 He is head over all things to the assembly,

which is His body; it is the public dignity of the vessel. But I think in Colossians the truth of the body is primarily in mind, with a view to our getting the gain of the head, drawing upon the fulness that is there.

A.G.B. Has that a Godward bearing? The note on verse 10, "ye are complete in him", says: 'We, as towards God, are complete in him.' Does that suggest the fulness that there is in the assembly Godward?

G.R.C. I have no doubt it means that from the divine side we are complete. As in Him, that is in Christ, we are in every way suited to the presence of God; we are complete in that sense. But then, there is the question of our drawing upon the head with a view to the body increasing with the increase of God, so that God's portion is in view in all this.

A.G.B. I wondered as to the fulness, that we would long to know something more of it in our approach towards God.

G.R.C. That is what we need. I am sure we all feel the need to know more about fulness in approaching God.

Ques. Would you say another word as to the one-ness of God's essential Being? Do we not understand from John 17, for instance, that the Persons were there before time?

G.R.C. Oh yes. The distinctions of Person, as we speak, are undoubtedly eternal. Only what has come out as to the nature and attributes of God apply equally to those Persons. For instance, 'God is love and God is light' pertain to God as such without distinction of Person, and this enters into our worship of God as Supreme. But in the expression 'all the *fulness* of the Deity' one cannot shut out the idea of distinguishing Persons, for all that is to be known of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is involved in it. J.N.D. says as to it that there could be no separation of the Son from the Father or the Spirit, though most distinct in their relationship, and thus all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Nevertheless the word Godhead does not *in itself* imply distinctions—it is just the Deity, that is what the word means.

Ques. In regard to our drawing upon the fulness that resided in Christ, does verse 19 help, "from whom all the

body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God"? I was thinking "from whom all the body".

G.R.C. Yes, that is it, "from whom" is where it comes from; it comes from this blessed Person.

We ought now to go on to the second part of our subject, and that is the question of the preciousness of the assembly to Christ. She is so precious to Him that it says, "the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it". But then we have a present matter, "Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh". That is a *present* matter, because it is during this period that the Lord Jesus has left other interests precious to Him, other affectionate interests, in order to be united to the assembly.

Rem. We have been needing help on that point.

G.R.C. It ought to affect us profoundly that during the present period the love of the Christ is such that He has left other matters, great and precious matters, in order to be united to the assembly, because he Has found something more precious, *most* precious.

W.W.S. Are we not now touching what is peculiarly delicate and intimate in the relation between Christ and the assembly? I was thinking of how it reads, "Husbands, love your own wives." It is a peculiarly exclusive matter: Christ loving the assembly exclusively, and the assembly loving Christ exclusively, would you say?

G.R.C. That is beautiful, is it not? There is a delicate sensitive touch about the headship of Christ to the assembly, which is unique; and I wonder whether we might get some further impressions as to the reason the assembly is so precious to Christ. First of all there is the question of her origin, so it says, "we are members of his body; we are of his flesh, and of his bones". That links with Genesis 2, where it says, "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man." And then there is the question of His helpmate, His like, which involves the versatility of the assembly. If a great man is seeking a counterpart, if he is seeking a wife, it is a great thing for him to find a wife who is versatile, and able to move with

him in all his interests without any difficulty, to be able to move with complete ease in the flow of his mind and affections in everything he has on hand, and I believe that is what the Lord Jesus has secured in the assembly.

Rem. So it says in Proverbs 31, "She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

G.R.C. Yes, quite so. In Genesis 2 it is "helpmate", his counterpart, as the note says.

W.B.H. Of him and for him—that is one of the earliest thoughts we get in scripture, I suppose.

H.F.N. Is that why in the book of Genesis the brides were to be of the same kindred? Rebecca was of Isaac's kindred. We must be of the order of the heavenly Man to be united to Him, and would that make us versatile?

G.R.C. I believe the versatility of the assembly rests upon the fact that we are of Him, we are His body. That was the distinction of the woman, that she was his bone and his flesh, and the fact that she was taken out of man gave her capacity to move with man in everything. And if you think of the assembly as Christ's body, He has a vessel which is entirely in the current of His own mind and thoughts.

J.P.H. Speaking in terms of Christ and the assembly, is there not a great deal in the last part of verse 28, "he that loves his own wife loves himself", the assembly being himself?

G.R.C. Yes. In this relationship of man and wife there is that which is exclusive in the reciprocal affections; but then, the idea of a helpmate, his like, means that the one who is the object of his affections can move out with him in everything that he has on hand.

Ques. You were speaking of varied interests which the Lord has for the moment laid down. Would the assembly be competent and sympathetic in thinking of those glories which attach to Him and are yet to be taken up in the future?

G.R.C. Yes, so that if you think of the assembly according to Genesis 1 as with Him in the headship, "let them have dominion", the assembly is competent for that, and that all enters into the Lord's love for the assembly; His affection is drawn out because of what He sees there: the potentialities of such a vessel. For instance, He has a

vessel competent to be entirely expressive of Him in administrative matters, the bride the Lamb's wife. When John is taken to see what she looks like, he sees the holy city; he sees an administrative vessel, entirely competent to administer for Christ and for God.

H.F.N. Do I understand you would connect that with the fifth chapter? The fifth chapter, if I might ask, is the assembly looked at as all glorious within. Is it not what she is as the special and peculiar object of the affections of the heart of Christ, and He has delivered Himself up for her? He has no other interests at the present time, but has given Himself wholly over to His wife?

G.R.C. That is just what I think. But then one of the reasons the assembly is so delightful to Him is because of all her capabilities. The *wife* implies that, as I understand it. The bride is entirely for His delight. But the word here is "for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall be united to his *wife*". That is, he sees the potentialities of that vessel, as his helpmate, his like; one delightful to him, of course, in bridal relations, but also entirely qualified to be with him in all his interests. Psalm 45 is upon lilies, that is one view of the assembly, the fragrance of the assembly to Christ, her purity; and then she is seen as the queen: "on thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir." Then if you come to Psalm 22 she is the hind of the morning, she is ready to move with her beloved in the highest heights in connection with the service of God.

H.F.N. Might we add one more thought: she really shines out as the virtuous woman and the heart of her husband does safely trust in her?

G.R.C. Excellent, so that is another feature.

W.W.S. Do I understand from what you are saying that you are speaking of the assembly now as entirely suited to Christ in every setting, whether it be in love's setting or in an administrative setting? Is that what you mean?

G.R.C. Well, when a man chooses a wife, you know, he has the whole matter in mind, has he not? I mean there is the love setting, the personal affections; but he needs a helpmate, his like, he needs one who will be with him in everything that he is going on with, and be thoroughly in the current of his mind and thoughts in every matter;

and so, as regards the assembly, if it is administrative matters, the Lord has a vessel entirely qualified to take up administration. If it is the service of God, He has a vessel available in that service.

H.B. These administrative matters, they would be done like Christ would do them, would they not?

G.R.C. That is just it—she acts just as her husband would. He can trust her to do it.

H.F.N. So that her husband is known in the gates?

G.R.C. Quite so.

Rem. That is what David saw in Abigail.

G.R.C. That is another excellent reference.

## READING (4)

John 1: 1-18

Revelation 21: 9-10, 1-7

J.F.G. Will you please give a brief résumé of the previous readings.

G.R.C. The theme that has been before us is the headship of Christ, as making way for the headship and supremacy of God. In the first reading we considered in a general way the truth of headship, and noticed particularly that according to God's purpose headship under God has been given to *man* as an order of being, not to angels; and so when man is first mentioned in scripture the word is, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion", and it says, "God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." This brings out typically the great truth of Christ's headship, Adam being a figure of Him to come, and also of the assembly's place with Him in the headship as united to Him. We dwelt at some length on the wonderful truth of image. The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the God who always will be invisible, but who is known in the One who is His image. We noted that it never says the Lord Jesus is in the likeness of God, because He *is God*. It would therefore be derogatory to speak of Him as in God's

likeness. The saints have to be brought into God's likeness, to be properly representative, but the Lord Jesus is the image of God, because He is God.

In the second reading we considered in Ephesians the scope of Christ's headship, particularly having in mind the title "the Christ", which implies the great and magnificent office or position into which He has been installed as Man, as the Lord's Anointed; and the mystery of God's will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times, to head up all things in the Christ. It is God's good pleasure that the Christ should be the One in whom everything is headed up in heaven and earth, and He has placed Him above every principality and authority and power and dominion and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come, and given Him to be head over all things to the assembly which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. We saw the bearing of that on the present time in chapter 3, where the assembly, as functioning under the headship of Christ as the true Solomon, displays the all-various wisdom of God to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies, not only in administrative matters but also in relation to the ascent, the service of God. An earthly principality saw Solomon's ascent, and there was no more spirit left in her, whereas the heavenly principalities are witnesses of the ascent of the true Solomon in connection with the service of praise in the assembly, so it says, "in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by the faith of him". The Father would strengthen us in all these matters that *the Christ*, referring to His headship, should dwell in our hearts by faith.

In the third reading we considered the special and the most sweet character of Christ's headship as relative to the assembly. Colossians 1 indicates what He is to the assembly as head. "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Such an One as *He* is the head of the body, the assembly. We dwelt on His greatness in several aspects, particularly being detained on the thought of "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". Such an One is the head of the body. We also dwelt briefly on what the assembly is to Him according to Ephesians 5,

as the helpmate, His like. His affections are set upon the assembly, not only because of the private relationship between Christ and the assembly but because of the potentialities of that vessel as His counterpart in everything, the wife. That is what has been before us.

Now we move on to consider the great subject of *God*, as presented by John—the declaration of God in chapter 1 and the great end in view in Revelation 21, where it says, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself”—those words being particularly in mind, “*God himself*”—“shall be with them, their God”. “God himself” suggests the greatest intimacy that could be known between the Supreme Being and the creature. It is God Himself, the God who has been declared.

It is to be noted that the Gospel of John begins with very great stress on the Deity of Christ, lest we should in any way limit the thought of God. It does not begin ‘in the beginning was God’, but “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Lower down it says, “No man has seen God at any time”, which takes us back to that beginning. In that state of Deity no one has seen God at any time. But the verses which follow disclose the marvellous truth that that God has been declared.

Ques. What have you in your mind in that it does not say ‘in the beginning was God’?

G.R.C. To point out that the initial stress is on the Word, on that Person as we speak. Lest we should in any way limit the thought of God in our minds, this verse begins with such an absolute statement as to the Deity of the Lord Jesus.

Ques. Does it guard the Person of the Lord Jesus?

G.R.C. That is no doubt its primary purpose. But it would also preserve us from limiting the thought of God in our minds.

Rem. The Word would apply to Him as coming into revelation?

G.R.C. That title refers to Him in Manhood, but it is asserting the truth of His Person, that He was with God, and was God, and that never ceases to be.

Ques. Is it going to help us if we can carry forward these two statements: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God"?

G.R.C. I think so, because coming into manhood does not alter the fact of His Deity. True, in coming here He emptied Himself, yet He makes it clear to His disciples before He leaves, by addressing the Father in their hearing in chapter 17, that that condition would remain no longer, but that, in glorified Manhood, He would *also* be glorified along with the Father with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was. That glory links with chapter 1, verse 1.

E.J.B. I was thinking of the way it can be said absolutely of one of the Persons that He was God, but at the same time that He was with God, the two thoughts.

G.R.C. It shows His distinctive personality, and yet His place in Deity. And, as I say, even though when here He had emptied Himself (though unchanged and unchanging in His Person—the 'I AM'), why should He in the presence of His disciples ask the Father, in view of His work here in humiliation being finished, that He should be glorified along with the Father with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was, unless to indicate to them that, as a glorified Man, He *also* now has the glory which He had along with the Father before the world was.

N.K.McL. That is the glory of Deity, is it?

G.R.C. Quite so, the glory of Deity. I am only making these remarks to indicate at the outset that scripture would preserve us from limiting the thought of God in an arbitrary way. While in many passages the context shows that the Father is in mind, in many others the Trinity is implied, without distinguishing the Persons. We are justified in referring to God as God without distinguishing Persons.

Ques. Could we have a word as to why John's writings are the last of the communications opening up this great subject?

G.R.C. Well, in one sense God reserves the best until the last. There is something exceedingly choice in the way John deals with things. But it seems most instructive that the three great apostles, Peter, Paul and John, all have the day of *God* before them, though Peter alone uses

the term. In a most marked way, as he leaves the scene, Peter is looking for the day of God, and exhorts us to be looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. There is a day called the day of Christ, and there is the day of the Lord, but the final day he calls the day of *God*, not exactly the Father's day. He is looking for it from the standpoint of the ways of God, and speaks of the new heavens and the new earth as a promise. Paul looks on to the same great end, but, while he also has the ways of God in mind, he views it from the standpoint of purpose. He says, "then comes the end", which we may perhaps dwell on this afternoon. John combines the two, I believe, bringing Peter's and Paul's lines together in Revelation 21. He speaks of the new heavens and the new earth, which is Peter's line, and then he speaks of the holy city, New Jerusalem, and the tabernacle of God, which is Paul's line, the assembly. But *God* is the great End.

J.McK. You would think this look backward is intended at the outset to carry us through on this holy level. If the source be such, if the beginning be such, what must the end be? This ray of glory in chapter 1, verse 1 lays the foundation for the bringing out of the truth in all its clarity and carrying it forward to the great end in our souls?

G.R.C. Quite so. It should help us therefore to look at the beginning and the end together, should it not?

J.McK. Does the Lord's title, the Alpha and Omega, encourage us to do that?

G.R.C. It is a marvellous title which the Lord Himself takes in Revelation 22: 13. In chapter 21 the One on the throne says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." It may be said that the Lord Jesus is the speaker there, but, even so, it is as *God* He is speaking; God, as God, is before us in that passage. But in chapter 22 the Lord applies the title to Himself personally, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every one as his work shall be. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Is that right?

J.McK. We need a lot of help on that line, because there is a danger of thinking of each Divine Person as having a part in Deity, instead of each being fully and blessedly God.

Ques. Do you think that the last verse of Psalm 48, "This God is our God for ever and ever", would be anticipative of God being fully made known or revealed?

G.R.C. I think it would be anticipative of what we are on now. Literally it applies to Israel, but then the Psalms were not written only for Israel; primarily they were for us.

Rem. I was only thinking of the definiteness and assurance with which the Psalmist speaks, "*This* God is *our* God."

G.R.C. Well, that is very blessed, and we may get help so as to be able to use such language. What do we know about Him, "This God"?

F.D.W. The same Psalmist says, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise". Is that in your mind as to the objective?

G.R.C. Yes. "This God." That is the God we are considering now, the God that is presented in John 1:1-18. "This God is our God." Can we say that? Have we embraced this God in our affections, as knowing Him?

E.J.F. You have referred to Revelation 21:6. What do you say as to the speaker in verse 7: "I will be to him God"?

G.R.C. I would simply leave it as it stands, that it is *God* speaking. We are sons of God.

E.J.F. The beginning is in John 1, and I wondered whether the end in the last scripture we are coming back to is that—"This God".

G.R.C. I think that is right. The declaration is to help us as to that, as to this God. No one has seen God at any time. He is beyond our range and reach in inscrutable Deity, but it says, "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared." So that that is what we may perhaps get help on now.

J.McK. Is it not a glorious tribute to the declaration that it can be said "God himself", without limitation of any kind?

G.R.C. It is.

J.McK. Is there not a tendency with us to think of the declaration as partial? But it brings the blessed God Himself within our range, nothing less.

G.R.C. That helps much, and shows the importance of considering the thought of declaration. Apart from it

God would be unknown, but “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared”, and this declaration, as I understand it, is full and complete. Everything has been brought out as to God which could be brought out and brought within the range of the creature.

Rem. The Word has been spoken of as the expression of the mind of God.

G.R.C. I think the title “the Word” stands related to the declaration and has a bearing on the renewed mind. The heart is engaged, because it says “we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”; the heart is engaged with what is entrancingly beautiful. But coupled with that there is the thought of the Word which implies that there is something to learn, something to be apprehended by the renewed mind. There is a vast range of things, more than we can ever compass, of course, in this Person. All that could be told out as to God has been told out in Him.

J.L.W. Would you link the expression “I am the Alpha and the Omega” with “the Word”?

G.R.C. There seems to be a connection. You were thinking that they are the first and last letters of the alphabet, encompassing all that can be known of God.

T.W.C. Why is the declaration connected with the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father followed, as it is, by an emphatic *He*—*He* has declared Him?

G.R.C. It seems to me that the declaration of God not only required the bringing out of what God is in His nature and attributes, which have been brought into relief in the way He has dealt with the sin question, but also the revelation of the Father through the Lord Jesus coming into the place of the only-begotten Son. This was necessary to give full expression to affections that were ever there in God, but which waited for the incarnation to find expression. While God’s dealing with the sin question has brought into expression the love of God, which requires nothing in its object to draw it out, because God *is* love, yet there are also affections, which stand related to eternal purpose, which could only find expression in the presence of an Object adequate for them. Such are the affections of the Father for the Son.

W.W.S. In that way is the declaration intended to be a most attractive matter in that it is made by the only-begotten Son, who *is* in the bosom of the Father?

G.R.C. I think it is. It is most attractive, and I do not think the declaration would be complete—God would not be fully declared—if these tender affections had not come into display.

H.F.N. I understand your thought is to lead up to the headship of God. Would you indicate what is in your mind as to this?

G.R.C. If God is to have His place as head, it implies not only His supremacy as God but that He is known and held in affection. Revelation 21 : 1–3 implies a scene where God is head, although the word is not mentioned because John is stressing the intimacy of eternal conditions. Yet the supremacy of God is there; for although He is dwelling with men in such nearness, it says, “He that sat on the throne said.” God is enthroned there—He is the King of the ages. But then it is God known in such a manner that, although He is the King of the ages, and has all the majesty of the throne attaching to Him, it can be said, “*God Himself* shall be with them.” Angels recognise His kingship and supremacy, but none can render Him such reverential worship as those of whom it can be said, “*God Himself* shall be with them, their God.” They are under His direct influence and He is enshrined in their affections as head.

H.F.N. Paul, in 1 Timothy, refers to the One who is the King of the ages, the invisible God. Do we need to know the great thought of kingship before we can get the great thought of headship in relation to God, of which you were speaking? The two thoughts seem almost inseparably connected.

G.R.C. I think they are. The thought of kingship is majesty and supremacy, but then, it is those who are near to the King and know Him and love Him who can, in the fullest way, accord Him the honour and glory which are His due as King of the ages. But as thus known and enshrined in their affections, He is head to them; they are under His influence and sway inwardly, as Paul says, “God all in all.”

F.D.W. Does declaration link with His majesty, and revelation with the side of affection?

G.R.C. Declaration is the bringing out of all that is to be known of God in and through this blessed Person, so that it is a very vast range; and within the bounds, as it were, of that declaration the Son reveals the Father to certain ones. "Nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal Him."

W.B.H. I was wondering why just before the eighteenth verse we get the reference to grace and truth subsisting through Jesus Christ. Would you say a word as to that?

G.R.C. Apart from grace and truth subsisting, we should never be able to stand in the presence of the declaration of God. But the declaration of God is made in and through the One in whom grace and truth subsists. So that we can stand in the presence of it, like Moses, who turned aside to see this great sight. It was holy ground, but he could stand there.

J.P.H. Would it be right to link this word in John 1, "he hath declared him", with the end of Ephesians 3, "That ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God"? The assembly, the nearest family, is able to take in all that has ever been made known as to God, and able to answer to it?

G.R.C. Being "filled even to all the fulness of God" would be the portion of those who, in this dispensation, come into the gain of the declaration; but the declaration stands whether anyone comes into the gain of it or not.

J.McK. Is the declaration complete in itself, and would it not stand for all the families named of the Father? Whether they all come into it in the same measure is another matter, but the declaration is complete, is it not?

G.R.C. That would help as to Mr. H.'s question. As regards the assembly it is a question of being filled unto all the fulness of God, but that could not be said of other families, one would judge.

H.F.N. Declaration is a universal matter, is it not? When it is a question of revelation, it is what is sovereign and what is specific. But every family in the redeemed universe will stand in the light and, in their measure, in the gain of the declaration, will they not?

G.R.C. And all that are brought into the gain of declaration are brought into it through the gracious activities of

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The declaration stands, but no one could be affected by it, man's state being what it is, unless the Father in grace began to work. The Father initiates things according to this gospel; "thine they were", the Lord says, "and thou gavest them me". Also in chapter 6, "No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him." So that this gospel is full of the gracious activities of the Father, and also those of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, with a view to souls being brought into the gain of the declaration.

J.McK. Does the title "the Word" suggest that there is a certain initiation required on the part of those who receive Him? I was thinking of what you have been referring to in chapter 6, "Every one that has heard from the Father Himself and has learned of Him comes to me." We need this initiation. I think you referred to the renewed mind.

G.R.C. Will you kindly enlarge on this?

J.McK. I was thinking of what followed—the light shining in darkness, and the darkness apprehending it not. It is a question of those who received Him, those "who have been born not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God".

G.R.C. Quite so. That brings about a sphere of things where what has come out in the Person who is the Word can be considered and taken in by our renewed minds. It says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among *us*." I think the "*us*" are the children of God of the previous verse; it is those who are born of God, those who have received Him. In this circle the Word can dwell. We cannot think of the Word dwelling in a world that He came to and which knew Him not, nor among His own of Israel who received Him not. There was no dwelling-place for the Word there. But through the operations of divine grace there was a circle where the Word dwelt—the Word became flesh and dwelt among *us*. Dwelling implies restful and suitable conditions, and that is what we are needing on an occasion like this, and I think we have them in measure. In such conditions contemplation is possible and thus our renewed minds can absorb more and more of what is expressed in Him who is the Word.

H.F.N. Would that be seen in the two, who, when they heard John the Baptist speaking, followed Jesus and abode with Him that day?

G.R.C. That is very good indeed, because they call Him "Rabbi", do they not? They say "Where abidest thou?" Mr. Taylor said years ago that we do not usually ask our school-teachers where they live, we are not interested. But here was the teacher, the Rabbi, and His teaching was of such a character that they virtually said, we want to come home with you. And it is when you are at home with the Lord that you get the benefit of His teaching fully.

H.F.N. So is it not important to emphasise the fact that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have contemplated his glory"? One fully admits that the contemplation in one sense was unique to the apostles, they witnessed a life lived in entire relation to the Father, yet I suppose we can come into this holy contemplative spirit. Then the second thing is, "Of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace", and thus we are led on spiritually into the great thought of declaration, are we not?

G.R.C. Very good indeed. That helps greatly as to how things work. There is this circle at the present time—Paul would call it the temple, but John speaks about it in a nearer and more intimate way. The temple of God, after all, is a homely place, although it is also a very holy place. What could be more holy and yet more homely than, "We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father"? And then, lest we should think that we could not be in such a circle, it says, "full of grace and truth, . . . for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace". All this grace is ministered that we might be happily and restfully in the homely and holy circle which, in the power of the Spirit now indwelling, surrounds the One who is the Word; and that, as you say, makes way for our getting the gain of the declaration: "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared".

Ques. Have you any thought as to why it is put as a simile in this sentence, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory *as* of an only-begotten with *a* father"?

G.R.C. I think it is bringing it down to us, to within the range of our intelligence, because we are accustomed to

this kind of thing in human life; we are accustomed to the idea of an only-begotten with a father—we know it is a most tender and precious thing. Not that in human affairs it could ever compare with the place of the Lord Jesus with the Father, but it is put as something known, a kind of thing known to the human race. But then, you see, the One who created the human race, the God of whom we are speaking, created these affections. And if He created such a relationship as this in the human race He must be capable of such affections in surpassing degree. In fact He really patterned human relationships after the divine relationships He had in mind to bring in, which alone would satisfy His heart. “An only-begotten with a father”—in that relationship, as applied to the Lord Jesus and His Father, the fulness of divine affections have, I think, come into display.

A.G.B. Does not what you are saying now have a bearing upon the remarkable place that is given to grace in this setting? Is it not suggestive of the infinite resources that have been supplied by God Himself in order that He may thus draw near? It says “grace upon grace”.

G.R.C. Should it not encourage us greatly that this boundless resource of grace is available in order that we might be restfully in this holy and yet homely circle, where we can contemplate His glory? With our hearts thus engaged, our renewed minds will be free to take in the truth, and we shall become intelligent as to the truth of the declaration.

H.F.N. And as to the headship of God!

J.McK. Is the reference to an “only-begotten with a father” to stress to us the importance of our acquaintance with and contemplation of Christ, for it is only there we shall have the knowledge of the Father?

G.R.C. Quite so, and only there that we shall have the knowledge of God.

J.T.W. Is something to be known in our local settings of the Lord dwelling among us?

G.R.C. I believe, as an application, it would answer to temple conditions in our localities, because we are there for enquiry, and all enquiry that we could possibly have finds an answer in the One who is the Word; but it involves now the presence of the Spirit.

J.T.W. So that while declaration would be for all, there are even now those that can have the wonderful privilege of together contemplating Christ's glory?

G.R.C. If there are temple conditions locally, we have the privilege of enquiry with a certainty that we shall get our enquiries answered, because the One who is the Word is available to us on account of the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

J.P.H. What more were you going to say about declaration?

G.R.C. The nature and attributes of God have shone out in dealing with the sin question; but I think it is evident that declaration also includes the whole truth relating to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's ministry in this gospel is full of the Father, and His activities and His supreme place in the economy, and it is full of Himself, the greatness of His Person, and the greatness of the place He has in the economy, and it is also full of the Holy Spirit. No other part of scripture so fully brings out the truth as to the Holy Spirit.

Ques. Would you say declaration is the widest and most inclusive thought that is presented to us?

G.R.C. I think it is.

A.S. Would it involve every phase of the Lord's life; His life here in flesh and blood and His death, and His resurrection and His ascension?

G.R.C. Yes, all are needed. And yet, because His ministry in this gospel anticipates His death, He brings out remarkable instruction as to the Father and as to the Son and as to the Holy Spirit.

J.A.P. Would the words "God and Father", or "God and our Father", or "God the Father", which are so frequent in scripture, suggest that there is a gradation in the way in which Divine Persons have been pleased to reveal Themselves?

G.R.C. I think so. The Lord says, "My Father is greater than I"? so that in what is called the economy of God (1 Tim. 1 : 4) the Father is supreme. In relation to the administration of things, in the scene of testimony and need, I think it is right to say that the Father is God to us, and the Son is Lord to us, and the Spirit is the Comforter. As in this scene of need, if we turn to God, we address Him

as Father, and He is our Father, we address the Lord Jesus as the Lord, and we seek the Spirit's help as the Comforter. The declaration includes what God would be to us in the scene of testimony and need. But as to our place before God, our eternal place, we know God in revelation and relationship in the Father, we know Him as expressed and manifested in the Son, and we know Him dwelling in us in the Spirit, but it is all *God*; it is God all in all, as I understand it.

E.J.B. Does it not peculiarly move our hearts toward God as we think of all that?

G.R.C. Quite so. It is God known in His own realm; God in relationship with us as known in the Father expressed to us in the Son, and dwelling in us by the Spirit, but it is *God*.

H.F.N. Paul could say "My God shall abundantly supply all your need".

G.R.C. That is interesting, because it shows that even in the scene of testimony and need we can use the title God to include the Trinity. The title "My God" covers all. All our needs would be supplied through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; because, after all, as to our needs, the Father takes charge of certain things, and the Lord Jesus takes charge of certain things, and the Spirit takes charge of certain things; but "my God shall abundantly supply all your need".

Ques. Is it not remarkable that in all the epistles, generally speaking, *God* is spoken of. The Father is referred to in the salutations, and once or twice otherwise, but generally through all the epistles it is God.

G.R.C. I think we have to take scripture in its setting, and in the realm of testimony and administration and need, "to us there is one God, the Father", and we generally turn to Him in all matters that stand related to God. But this does not alter the fact that Paul repeatedly uses the term God in a wider sense. I do not believe he was limiting himself at all when he says, "my God shall abundantly supply all your need"; and again, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all." As regards his doxologies in Romans one is addressed to Christ, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever", but the others are addressed to God as God without limitation.

H.F.N. Now may we have a word on Revelation?

G.R.C. In Revelation we come to the end as given us by John, and again the thought of God is stressed, both in the millennial and the eternal day. In both passages there is a connection between the assembly, as under the headship of Christ, and the place God has. The word is, "Come here, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife". That is the assembly under the headship of Christ, entirely amenable and responsive to Him; but what John sees is the holy city, because the assembly is versatile; she is available to Christ in every aspect in which He needs her. In the millennium He needs her in administration, and in that aspect she is the city, the wife is the city, wholly like her husband in administration; and so she has the glory of God. The Lord Jesus is the One in whom the glory of God shines, of course, but the holy city has the glory of God.

Then in the eternal state, he says, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Again you have the link with Christ in affection and headship, a bride adorned for her husband; but the voice from heaven says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God . . ." John is told that the vessel with which he is occupied as the bride is also the tabernacle of God. The truth is that, as marked by bridal affection, the assembly is a vessel in which Christ is enshrined and therefore God rests in it complacently. The tabernacle of old is a type. Christ was enshrined in it as the ark, and God could rest there—everything was complacent for God. And how does Christ get His place as enshrined in the assembly? It is through bridal affections.

J.McK. Is it not wonderful that the same word can be applied in Revelation 21 as in John 1: 9. The Word tabernacled amongst us, and now the tabernacle of God with men. Would it imply that the answer is gloriously reached?

G.R.C. It is most interesting that we begin and end with this thought of tabernacle.

J.McK. It is so unofficial.

G.R.C. We must not think of the tabernacle as a tent. The word tabernacle does not mean a tent but a dwelling-place. In the Old Testament there was the tabernacle and

the tent over the tabernacle which protected it. But in eternity the tent is not needed—there is no more journeying. It is a dwelling-place in intimacy, as Mr. M. says; not the palatial aspect as verses 10 et seq. David says, “The palace is not for man but for Jehovah Elohim.” That is the display side. Buckingham Palace is a palace, but if you went inside you would find intimate and homely family affections there. The tabernacle was merged in the temple under Solomon; the two ideas merge, for he brought up the tabernacle and all its vessels into the house. It is a spiritual idea. The tabernacle would suggest the intimate and homely side of things which underlie the display and goes on to eternity, would it not?

W.W.S. Does the scripture in Revelation stress the thought of what is *to* eternity, as it says, “from eternity to eternity thou art God”, the economy coming in between, God at the beginning and God at the end?

G.R.C. Quite so. How much richer the “to eternity” is, is it not? How much richer, because the declaration has come in between, and now, in what we can speak of as “to eternity”, God *Himself* is known in a most blessed way in this tabernacle. He is known in the Father in revelation and relationship, He is known in the Son in expression and manifestation, and He is known in the Spirit as dwelling. What a tabernacle this is, and God *Himself* is in it. It is God *Himself* who is there.

Ques. Is that covered in “God is love”?

G.R.C. The declaration of God involves the great truth that God is love. He that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. In the eternal state we shall dwell in God and God in us. Then if you think of God *Himself* being with the other families *through* the tabernacle, how near He must be to those who form the tabernacle. The nearness of those who form the tabernacle is indescribable.

J.McK. Is not that the beauty of the tabernacle, that God Himself, in all His blessedness, will be there and thus there will be a mediatorial condition of things in which the glory will radiate and be known by other families.

G.R.C. Just so. And if it can be said of the men who form the other families that God Himself is with them because His tabernacle is there, what must be the nearness of those who form that tabernacle? It cannot be described.

A.G.B. Does the last part of verse 6 suggest to your mind the way in which these great and wonderful thoughts can come within the range of any who thirst after them?

G.R.C. That is just it. If anybody thirsts after eternal realities the One on the throne would encourage such. If thirst has been awakened with any of us today, He would say to us, "I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely." The Spirit, as we know, has no less an objective before Him than to bring souls into the gain of eternity now.

Ques. Would the expression "He that sat on the throne said" emphasise the supremacy of God—God is still supreme?

G.R.C. Yes, and also the city. We have to take account of the fact that the city is still there in eternity, the city suggesting what stands related to the majesty of God. It is His city, the holy city, new Jerusalem. So there is still the city and the throne; but there is also the tabernacle, God so near.

Ques. Do you mean that the assembly will be used mediately to the other families in eternity?

G.R.C. I think so. I think that is what Mr. M. had in mind.

J.A.P. What a transparent vessel she must be!

H.F.N. Then it says finally, "He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be to him God." God would have every one of us to be overcomers in view of eternity. We inherit all these things on the principle of overcoming.

G.R.C. What an immense encouragement to be an overcomer and to go in for these things.

J.McK. Is it significant that the city in its eternal setting precedes the millennial aspect in this chapter?

G.R.C. I think it is, because, after all, the assembly will be in her eternal place before she comes out in the millennium. We shall have reached *our* eternal state and condition, although there will not yet be a new heaven and a new earth. The great objective, as I see it, in the ministry of Peter, Paul, and John is not simply that, in our spirits, we should anticipate the world to come, but that we should reach eternity. And so the narrative here hastens on to eternity, then it comes back to tell us about the world to come.

## READING (5)

1 Corinthians 15: 20–28. 1 Chronicles 29: 10–13, 20.  
Ephesians 3: 19–21. 2 Chronicles 5: 13–14

G.R.C. We have in mind what Paul refers to as “the end” in verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 15, “then the end”. It is the great end that divine operations are moving towards, and suggests finality. The passage deals with matters, to some extent, from an historical angle, yet, in the power of the Spirit, we are to ante-date the end, arriving at it now in our spirits; and it is profitable to look at the order in which the great events take place. Ephesians 3 is not historical, but rather has in view our arrival now at the end, in so far as the assembly is concerned in the service and testimony of God; we are to arrive even now in our spirits at the greatness of what the assembly is in Christ Jesus, the vessel of God’s glory and service and praise. The passage in 1 Chronicles 29 links with 1 Corinthians 15, a remarkable passage if we take it as typical of Christ, proving what has been before us, namely, that the headship of Christ is to make way for the headship of God. David had no other thought in his mind. God made him head, He made him His firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth, but David had no thought in his mind whatever of using that position for his own aggrandisement. His whole aim was to use the great position God had given him as head in order to make way for the headship of God. So that it is the greatest moment of David’s life, when he rises to what he had ever had before him, and says, “Thou art exalted as head above all.” On the other hand, the passage in 2 Chronicles 5 may link more with Ephesians 3, as to the way we arrive at that at the present time in unity in the service and praise of God.

I think we should keep in mind that all these passages show what the perfect Man does for His God. It is the Son, of course, and all the affections of sonship enter into the matter; David and Solomon were typically in the place of son but, nevertheless, it is what a Man, the true Man,

is doing for His God. It links with what the Lord Jesus says in John 20, "My God, and your God"—what He is doing for His God. And so the point in 1 Corinthians 15 is *the Christ*; it is the Man. "As in the Adam all die, thus in the Christ all shall be made alive." The two heads are brought before us. "But each in his own rank: the first-fruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming." There are those that are *the Christ's*; but while He has great pleasure in them, His great aim is that all that comes under His hand should be available for His God.

J.P.H. As to what you have before you this afternoon, is it the perfect filling out by Christ of God's great original thoughts in Genesis 1, "Let us make man in our image"?

G.R.C. It includes that, but also brings in the great return to God. Man set in headship in God's image is to express the invisible God in His creation. But then headship has upward as well as downward functions. The Lord Jesus as head uses the immensity of His power and the great influence of His love, the love of the Christ, which surpasses knowledge, to gather up everything in the universe for His God. That is typified in David and Solomon gathering up everything in the way of response. On the one hand God is known through the head, who is His image; but on the other hand the Man who is head in the mighty power and influence of His love, which flows in all directions, towards His God as well as towards the assembly, gathers up all for the glory and praise of His God, and that is perfection in man. It is perfection in man to consider wholly and completely for God.

J.McK. So that you have the great return flow here; there has been the outward flow in declaration, and now the same blessed Person gathers everything up in a return flow.

G.R.C. That is just what I thought. I think we have to see those two sides of headship. On the one hand God is expressed in the head, He is the image of God; but then the fruit of that expression, as it takes effect, is that there is a vast response secured for God, and the perfection of man as seen in Christ lies in the fact that He gathers up all that response, which in one sense centres in Himself, and carries it to His God.

H.F.N. Would that be seen in Hebrews 2, "I will declare thy name", and then, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? Is that the downward and upward feature?

G.R.C. I think that is right. The name declared, of course, is "My Father and your Father, and my God and your God". And you get a somewhat similar order to that here, because it says, "then the end, when He gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father". That is the first thing, "To him who is God and Father".

H.F.N. At the beginning of the meetings you made a very valuable remark, that we might sum it up in the thought of God and Christ, and Father and Son. Would these passages give us the great climax of those two lines?

G.R.C. They would, and they show that the climax of all is God. It is not that one would say one line was greater than the other exactly; but there is an "end" in view; and I believe when we come to finality it links with the thought of *God*, "My God and your God."

H.F.N. Would it be right to say that the two lines merge when we come to the great finality of God all in all? It is the day of God's eternal supremacy, is it not?

G.R.C. Quite so.

Ques. Would "the end" refer to the end of God's operations?

G.R.C. In contrast, you mean, to His rest. It is no longer a question of operations but of rest.

N.K.McL. The culmination of His ways?

G.R.C. Yes, and the final establishment of His purpose. "Then the end." What a grand expression that is!

J.A.P. Do you have men in sonship connected in this way, in the eternal day?

G.R.C. That is the relationship men will always be in—sonship never ceases. When it says the tabernacle of God is with men, it means in sonship; that is the liberty of the position. "I will be to him God, and he shall be to me son" is the word to the overcomer. But then, it is *men*, not angels. It is in and through Man that God has secured His end.

Ques. God speaks about David as a *man* after His heart. Does that bear on what you said about what a man is to his God?

G.R.C. That is exactly what I had in mind. David was typically in the place of son with God, "I will make him my firstborn"; but God says of him, "I have found David, a *man* after my own heart, who will do all my will."

F.D.W. Do you see the operational side set out in David in Psalm 132 with his longings for a place for Jehovah and for the ark, and then "Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength"?

G.R.C. That helps, because I think we have to see that *the place for God* is in the assembly. Through the assembly God will secure His place in the universe, but primarily the place for God is in the assembly—not exactly in the family, but in the assembly. I believe as the service proceeds on Lord's Day morning we touch the blessedness of bridal and wifely relations with Christ, and we do not leave them behind—we carry them forward. We leave nothing behind, for all is cumulative in the service. Then we enjoy the fact that the assembly, which is His body and His bride, is the first of all the families; it is the assembly of the firstborn, and I think that is where the Father's portion comes in; but that is connected with our privilege and our blessing. Then we move on to the thought of a place for God, His habitation, a place suited for One so great as God. Not that any vessel could contain God—the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him—and yet the Man after His own heart, who has done all His will, has secured a place worthy of God, as the abode of His glory and service and praise, and that is the assembly. I believe we have to distinguish between a place for us in blessing and nearness in the Father's house, a place in sonship with all its joy, and then the fact that under the headship of Christ the assembly becomes the place and abode for God.

J.McK. Is it significant that it is the assembly in *Christ Jesus*? I was wondering whether the peculiar lustre and glory of Christ Jesus, that order of man, entered into it. It is not just the position of the assembly as in Christ, it is not official; but is it not love's way of referring to the assembly?

G.R.C. What do you mean when you say it is not official?

J.McK. Well, we have the two expressions used in the epistle, "In Christ" and "In Christ Jesus". You have been speaking about the Man and what He secured for His God. I was wondering whether the tender sensibilities and glories of that Person are not now the portion of the assembly?

G.R.C. The assembly is wholly in accord with that Man. Our love for Him is greatly stimulated as we see in Him the perfect Man, who has considered so fully and completely for His God. Our hearts adore Him when we think of it, the Man who completely effaced Himself, even unto death and abandonment, as Psalm 22 shows, in order that His God might dwell among the praises of Israel, that His God might have a suitable place; and that place is the assembly. And the assembly loves that Man, and is under the influence of His love and feelings in such a manner that she is responsive to His God, and has an appreciation of His God, in measure like His own. And what an appreciation He has of God. Think of what the appreciation of God must be in a Man who is God.

Ques. Philippians 2 refers to the downward stoop, and the power which He has to subdue all things to Himself, and to His exaltation.

G.R.C. 1 Corinthians 15 indicates His power to subdue all things to Himself, and what He has in mind in doing it.

Ques. Does Christ Jesus bring in the great thought of finality, man as he is and where he is according to the purpose of God?

G.R.C. I think it does. "In Christ Jesus" is our status and also involves our state, according to God. The expression could never be used of angels. Angels are heavenly beings, but they are not in the heavenlies *in Christ Jesus*. We are raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. That is a status in the heavenlies that no beings have had except those who form the assembly. No other company has such a status. The *assembly* in Christ Jesus is a greater conception than individual saints in Christ Jesus. It is the greatest conception of all. What a vessel! It is the abode of God's glory.

H.F.N. Is your thought that we should entirely lose sight of ourselves, and have the ability to abstract

ourselves? The assembly is wholly occupied with God and anticipates the day when God shall be all in all.

G.R.C. Exactly. I think if we touch the last verse of Ephesians 3 we do anticipate verse 28 of 1 Corinthians 15: "that God may be all in all". As we anticipate that now, there is glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus, glory to Him in the service of praise that proceeds, and glory to Him in the testimony that flows out of it.

Ques. Could we have a distinction drawn between God as Father and God all in all?

G.R.C. Well, it says, "Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father." He is Man, He is the Son, and came forth from the Father, and came into the world, and He has left the world and gone to the Father. He is continuing with the operations which have been entrusted to Him, but this passage indicates that the time is coming when all the operations entrusted to Him will be finished, and how comely it is that at the end He should give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father. All things have been delivered to Him by His Father for a purpose which is viewed here as fully achieved. While He is achieving it He has a peculiar place of supremacy as Man. The prominent feature of the world to come is that it is the kingdom of a Man; the Lord speaks of the Son of man coming in His kingdom. But His kingdom serves to an end, and when that end is reached, according to God's purpose, He gives up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father. The kingdom does not come to an end; the kingdom is an eternal thought, but it is no longer the kingdom of a Man, so to speak—it is the direct kingdom of God.

N.K.McL. Could you just enlarge on that, that the kingdom does not come to an end?

G.R.C. It is important to understand that the kingdom of God is eternal. In the millennial day, as to the public position, it is, in a sense, the kingdom of a Man, the Lord Jesus reigns. Although, according to the type of Solomon and David, He is on Jehovah's throne, nevertheless it is a Man that is administering things and is prominent. But the final thing is that He gives up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, with a view to the direct rule and influence of God as head, the God made known to us in

declaration and revelation. *He* is the King of the ages, the immortal, invisible and only God.

J.A.P. What do you make of the expression “the Father’s kingdom” in that regard?

G.R.C. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” It is a comforting thought: God is their Father. The reference is to the millennial kingdom. It is really the kingdom of Christ, but at the same time it is the kingdom of their Father, which I think is very precious. God is known to us in the Father, and that must enter also into the eternal aspect of the kingdom.

J.McK. Would the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness imply that an administration in love continues?

G.R.C. It would. And I believe that involves the acknowledgment of God in His supremacy—it would not be righteousness otherwise. He is supreme in love and in majesty. In the new heavens and the new earth there will never be another challenge to the complete supremacy of God as King of the ages and as head above all. This glorious Man brings a state of things to pass in which the headship of God is beyond the reach of any challenge, for the glory of God radiates in Him as the image of the invisible God, and through Him the response to God is fully secured.

W.W.S. Is the thought of the kingdom being an eternal one confirmed in the place given to subjection in verse 28?

G.R.C. I think it is, and I think there are other passages which confirm it. Mr. Taylor has drawn attention, you will no doubt remember, to verse 50 of this chapter, “But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility.” Thus in the final phase flesh and blood do not enter into it, whereas in the world to come people on earth will be blessed in flesh-and-blood conditions.

Ques. Does the throne of verse 5 of Revelation 21 link on with the eternal setting of the kingdom—“He that sat on the throne”?

G.R.C. Yes. “He that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new.” That is a proof that the kingdom goes on to eternity. It is the new creation, but there is

One who is on the throne. There is also a city, which shows that while administration is not prominent, for no gates are mentioned, yet there is administration in the sense of light and influence from the city.

Ques. Could we have a word as to the Son also Himself being placed in subjection that God may be all in all.

G.R.C. I think the idea of the passage is that the kingdom in the hands of a Man ceases. The Son is one of the greatest titles the Lord has, and always brings to mind His Deity, and yet it is a title that only applies to Him in manhood. His kingdom does not come to an end in the sense of failing, for "of his kingdom there shall be no end", it says in Luke. It is given up in as great power and vigour as when it commenced. It does not therefore really come to an end, but it is given up to Him who is God and Father, so that instead of the kingdom of a Man you have the direct rule of God.

F.D.W. Could it be said that here the great objective in view in the economy of God has been reached?

G.R.C. The operations of God, I think, have reached their end, but the economy goes on to eternity.

H.F.N. Is not the throne of God in the Old Testament connected with the Ark and the Mercy Seat? That would give the throne an eternal setting, would it not?

Ques. "Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age." Does that go beyond the world to come?

G.R.C. I would not think so. I think that is a reference to Christ Himself: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness" (Ps. 45: 6, 7). I think it shows that the assembly (applying the Psalm to the assembly) has always a great appreciation of the Deity of Christ. When we are responding to Him as our Beloved, and as Head of the assembly, we are always mindful of His Deity. Psalm 45, Colossians 1, and the Lord's presentation of Himself as "the *Root* and offspring of David" all confirm this. He is peculiarly attractive to the bride as "the *Root* and offspring of David".

J.A.P. Would mediatorship go on to eternity?

G.R.C. Yes, in the sense that the Lord Jesus is the One in whom God is manifested and expressed. As was said

this morning, God is known to us eternally in revelation and relationship in the Father, and He is expressed and manifested eternally in the Son, for we see God nowhere else, and He dwells in us eternally in the Spirit. But it is all *God*. *That* is the God we know.

E.R.F. Do you think Mr. Darby had the eternal character of the throne in mind in the hymn

*“ Thy counsels too in all Thine own,  
Fulfilled by power divine,  
Spread wide the glory of Thy throne,  
Where all in glory shine”?*

G.R.C. I would say that is the throne of Revelation 21. What about that, Mr. McL?

N.K.McL. Very good.

H.F.N. Was not the vision in chapter 5 given to impress John with the eternal stability of the throne in contrast to the failure of the assembly?

G.R.C. I would certainly go with that. There is the throne, and One that sits on it. The Person is not defined because it is God as God that is in mind. If the Person is Christ, it is *as representing God*. And then the Lamb is there, in the midst of the throne.

H.F.N. Will you just say a few words as to how this is going to affect us in the service of God, because I know that is in your mind.

G.R.C. I am hoping that we shall come more into the flow and current of Christ's own affections and feelings towards His God, and I believe that is what is in mind in Ephesians 3. It says “to know the love of the Christ”. It does not say the love of the Son, though He *is* the Son, but to know the love of the Christ, the love of that Man, the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge. The love of the Man who could say in type, “I love my master, my wife, and my children”; it is a love which flows in all directions and gathers up everything in the universe for God.

H.F.N. I think it used to be said that the love of the Christ was the love of the husband.

G.R.C. I think that restricts it too much. I believe the love of the Christ is one indivisible love which flows in all

directions, *the love of a perfect Man, and the love of a perfect Man must have God as its supreme Object; otherwise He would not be a perfect Man.* He must have God as His supreme object, and His wife as His next object, and His children as His next object, which may, if we just apply it, take in the other families.

J.F.G. As we come into the gain of what you are saying we could certainly say eternity has begun, could we not?

G.R.C. That is just what we could say.

N.K.McL. "I love my master, my wife, and my children." My master comes first.

G.R.C. That is right, and it could not be otherwise. It would not be the love of a perfect Man if God were not first.

Ques. Would the Son being placed in subjection be the supreme act of love? It is not the thought of obligation there, is it?

G.R.C. The way it is put is extraordinary. It does not say anyone put Him in subjection; it is put in an impersonal way, "Then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him." It is most holy ground and one ought not to say much about it, but undoubtedly it is a love matter, and the will of God, in the Oneness of Supreme Being, enters into it.

Ques. Does subjection make way for headship, for God to have His place as head?

G.R.C. It does, and so it says, "He has put all things in subjection under his feet." Everything else is brought into subjection, and then it says, "When all things shall have been brought into subjection to *him* . . ." Once that is done, and all are recognising the headship of the Son, then the Son Himself, as it were, makes way for the headship of God. His whole service has had in view the headship of God. David, in the 29th of 1 Chronicles is a type. Having subdued everything and having all under his sway, then he says, "Thou art exalted as head above all."

J.McK. Is it remarkable that the apostle should present this wealthy parenthesis to the Corinthians?

G.R.C. It is. You would not expect to find it, would you? Say some more about it.

J.McK. Would not this passage of such infinite wealth make the Corinthians ashamed of their poverty? The

devotedness of the Son and His place in subjection would all be a word to them, would it not?

G.R.C. That is very helpful, because they were insubject, were they not, and were boasting.

J.McK. And ruling, ruling as kings.

G.R.C. What a state of affairs! You cannot think of anything which would come with such a rebuke to them as this passage, for they see the perfect Man and His operations, and what is the final end.

Rem. The apostle seems to confirm that, does he not, in this second letter when he says, "Whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him is the amen, for glory to God by us"?

G.R.C. Very good. That is the great end: glory to God by us. And that really has its final expression in "To him be glory in the assembly".

Ques. Where it says in relation to all being put under him "the last enemy that is annulled is death", does that imply that there is to be no cessation of response?

G.R.C. You mean it is the land of the living? Quite so. It is a living system, so that there will be no cessation of response.

J.P.H. We would like help as to this very great matter, the assembly being available to Christ responsively to God. We love to come into it. Could you help us more? I think you said that the assembly does not cease in the service of God as such, at the point of union with Christ or something to that effect.

G.R.C. It does not cease at all. The assembly is not limited to one phase of the service. There is the assembly's personal relation with Christ, the reciprocal affection and delight between the Christ and His assembly. That lays the foundation for what the assembly is as the habitation of God, as the scriptures indicate. The vessel which is said to be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband *is* the tabernacle of God; she is that *because of her relations with Christ*. She loves Christ, He is enshrined in her affections, and in such a vessel as that, where Christ is enshrined, like the ark enshrined in the tabernacle, everything is pleasurable to God, and entirely in accord with God, and there God dwells. But then Christ is not only the centre, like the Ark, but is active in His love, as the

true Solomon, to secure full response to His God in such a vessel.

J.P.H. Well, I think I can speak for us all and say that we would love to be helped about this passage, and the parallel passage in Hebrews 2, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praise"—the manner of it.

G.R.C. Well, we must keep in mind the versatility of the assembly. The word to John is, "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife", but what he is shown is a city. She is the city because she is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Because she is the true wife she can be trusted with divine administration, so she becomes the city of God. Her bridal and wifely links are all with Christ, not with God, but because she is held thus in affection for Christ, and under His headship and influence in everything, therefore she becomes the city of God. God can trust her even as He trusted Christ with His administration and interests. And so with the service of praise, the vessel which is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" is the tabernacle of God, where His service goes on through all eternity, because of the very great place Christ has in her affections. He has her completely under His influence and control. So that I think we have to see that the idea of the bride and the wife merges in the city and in the tabernacle.

T.W.C. Does John 17: 22 help, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me"?

G.R.C. I believe that verse is a help in this matter. "I in them and thou in me" involves a place for God. "I in them" is like the ark enshrined in the house, and where the ark is there is the place for God, "thou in me".

F.D.W. Is not all this to draw us in to being contributors in love? Is that not seen in the way David operated with a view to others contributing for the house? I was thinking of what he contributed of his own, thus giving a lead to all those who were willing to be themselves contributors. Is that in line with what you have in mind?

G.R.C. It is, because I think that is how we see the headship of David working out. David loved his God

supremely, and his God was his great objective, and he brought the people into line with himself. Will you please read the verse?

F.D.W. "And I know, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart have I willingly offered all these things; and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, offer willingly to thee" (1 Chron. 29: 17).

G.R.C. It illustrates the working of headship. What a joy it is to the heart of Christ to see all the saints moving in the current of His own affections towards God, all willingly offering, all wholly and without reserve in the service of God!

H.F.N. Is that not touchingly confirmed in verse 10, "And David blessed Jehovah in the sight of all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Jehovah, the God of our father Israel, for ever and ever" and so on; and then the people are brought into the current of it, are they not, in verse 20, "And David said to all the congregation, Bless now Jehovah your God. And all the congregation blessed Jehovah the God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and did homage to Jehovah and the king." Is that it?

G.R.C. That is very beautiful, and I believe the two sides of worship are expressed there. "All the congregation blessed Jehovah the God of their fathers" would be what is expressed, I think, in the way of praise and thanksgiving, whereas the bowing down their heads is the inward prostration of heart.

A.G.B. What bearing would verse 17 have upon our localities in carrying these great thoughts in our hearts as David did, evidently from the earliest of his days, and working to an end?

G.R.C. If we are under the influence of the true David, I believe that our great concern will be that there should be a place for God in each of our localities. Perhaps as a result of our being together today there will be a better place for God than there ever has been before. I think we must distinguish between the family idea, which is our blessing and privilege, affording liberty with God, and which underlies the truth of the assembly, and the assembly itself, which is a vessel, a place for God, a place worthy

of God in His greatness. Even in the local setting it is intended to be that; the assembly of God in Corinth involves a place for God *in that city*. Is that right, Mr. B.?

A.G.B. That is what I had in my mind. I was just wondering how far these thoughts coming into our hearts perhaps in early days may develop as they did with David and be brought to finality.

G.R.C. That is very important. There will be something for God if we all go away under the influence of the love of the Christ, for then our chief concern in our localities will be to secure a state and condition among the saints suited to God, and His service—worthy of One so great as God.

F.R.H. What is the bearing of the care meeting on the service of God?

G.R.C. The greatest thought of care as I understand it is caring for the assembly of God, a most remarkable expression. There is the thought of caring for the sheep and shepherding the sheep, but the greatest matter of care, I believe, is caring for the assembly of God. You have in mind that vessel, and that it should be what it is intended to be.

J.McK. Do you think that whilst you may speak of David typically, yet this would be the way to help this line of truth forward in our localities? Blessing Jehovah is perhaps one of the most effective ways of getting the truth into the hearts of the saints.

G.R.C. That is a most interesting thing, because the service of song is prophetic, is it not? According to 1 Chronicles 25, some singers were to prophesy with the lute and harp and cymbal, and others prophesied under the direction of the king, and others prophesied with the harp to give thanks and to praise Jehovah. The service of song and thanksgiving in the assembly is the most powerful way, I believe, of bringing the saints into the mind of God. The idea of prophecy is that you bring people into the mind of God. In the service of song it is not prophecy as bearing on our state, but prophecy in a greater sense, as bringing people into the mind of God according to His purpose; because that aspect of the service, its prophetic aspect, is not for God. He does not need prophecy; it is for the saints. So that Ephesians 5: 18–20

begins with speaking *to yourselves*. While God is before us, we speak aloud and speak distinctly, so that the brethren should hear, in order that all may be carried and transported into the realm of things that we are speaking or singing about. That is the idea of prophecy in song, the word music means transport. (See footnote to 1 Chron. 15: 22.) We are transported into the realm of things of which the song speaks.

J.McK. I have been struck with the way in the Old Testament, when the Spirit is speaking expressly, He often takes up verse to do it as though to bring the matter quickly into our affections.

G.R.C. That would indicate, among other things, how important the hymn book is, and how important that the hymn book should be accurate. Not that we can get perfection, but the hymns we have had during these few days have been remarkable. They have helped us all on into the very realm of things we are talking about; they have been prophetic.

J.McK. Does Mr. Darby not make a comment in his preface that the hymn should be a sustained vehicle of the truth which sets our souls in communion with Christ, and even with the Father?

Rem. So the thought of leadership in praise would bring that in too, would it not? The thirteenth verse, "And now, O God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name"—that would have a great effect, the people joining in.

G.R.C. It does have a great effect, and brings us into things, in a way in which we cannot be brought into them otherwise.

E.J.B. Is this involved in the verse that has been referred to in Hebrews 2, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? He can rely fully upon the assembly to enter into His thoughts of His God? And in the way of song He sets it on.

W.W.S. I should like to ask if there is a refinement conveyed in song which cannot be expressed in any other way?

G.R.C. There is refinement. It is prophecy which is not bearing on state. In a ministry meeting, prophecy has to bear often on our state, but the benefit of the service of

God is that if things are right it contains a prophetic element of the most positive kind, which brings the mind of God relative to His purpose so powerfully into our souls that we are transported into the realm of purpose.

H.F.N. Have we an illustration of that earlier in David's history? When he brings up the ark it says, "Then on that day David delivered this psalm to give thanks to Jehovah, to Asaph and his brethren", and so on. Is that an illustration of how it would work in the assembly as Christ gets His place?

G.R.C. You are thinking of David there as a type of Christ. It seems to indicate how Christ gives the lead, does it not, that David handed the psalm to Asaph and his brethren, but it came from David.

H.F.N. Quite, and do you not think in regard to our service there would be more freshness and originality about it—I mean divine originality—and a more living character, if what you have been speaking of in relation to Christ really had its place in our hearts.

G.R.C. There would, and I believe that expression "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" is just what we need to keep us in that freshness. We are kept in the current of the love of the perfect Man. We are in the current of His love for His God, as well as in the current of His love for His assembly.

H.F.N. I am glad you mentioned that. I had always looked at that scripture in relation to the Christ as meaning that all the husband's interests were in the heart of His wife, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. But I think, as we are viewing it now, it is something worth thinking over—the love of a Man and reaching out to the whole universe.

G.R.C. Yes, but then the greatest interest in the heart of the perfect Man is His God. So that as the assembly embraces His interests she embraces His chief interest, and His chief interest is His God.

H.F.N. Well, that is what I am thankful for. I think we have all got help on the point; I trust we have. I feel that I have got a wider view of it today than I have had before, and it must lead up to God. "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen."

G.R.C. And does it not indicate how we arrive at the fulness of God? Knowing the love of the Christ for His God would make us sensitive, so that in our measure we should appreciate His God as He does, and who can measure the appreciation of that Man, who is God, for God. We cannot measure it, and yet we are to be filled to all the fulness of God.

Ques. Is not the expression "My God" in Revelation 3: 12 used by the Lord in His present position?

G.R.C. His word to Philadelphia comes from Him in His present position. It is not only His resurrection position as in John 20, but as the ascended and glorified Man He still says "my God"—"the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God". He has got the assembly before Him as the vessel which is alone suited to be the residence of the glory of His God—the city of His God, the new Jerusalem. You might say, He is thinking of His bride; she *is* His bride, but He is not thinking of her in that connection; He is thinking of her as the vessel suited to be the residence of God's glory.

J.F.G. Would you be free to say another word as to John 20. Is the Lord seeking to lead our affections not only to the Father, but, as He says, to "my God and your God"? How far would that go?

G.R.C. As far as ever our spirituality permits, I would say. What do you say?

J.F.G. While the Lord says "my Father and your Father", we touch the Father, but is not the great end in assembly service what you are bringing before us now—to reach on to the headship of God?

G.R.C. That is just what I have in mind. "My Father and your Father"—we delight in the family side of things; the Father has named every family, in heaven and on earth. But for an adequate abode of the divine glory a formed and sensitive *vessel* is needed. The family must underlie this; the family is our privilege and our blessing, and our liberty is connected with it, and the Father has a great place in our responsive worship. But when you come to "my God and your God" it involves the assembly as a vessel of the divine glory and service.

Ques. Does the thought of exceeding magnificent come in?

G.R.C. Yes, it does. God is so great, that, as David says, "the house is not for man, but for Jehovah Elohim, and it must be exceeding great in fame and beauty in all lands". And that is what the assembly is; the assembly is exceeding great in fame and beauty throughout the universe. There is no vessel like it; it is an adequate vessel to be the residence of the divine glory.

A.G. Is there a touch on that line in the end of Ephesians 3, "exceedingly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power which works in us"?

G.R.C. Quite so. That is a very encouraging verse as we think of these great matters, that the God who is the great objective in these things can do exceedingly above all we ask or think according to the power that works in us. And that is what He is doing. *He is always doing more than we ask or think.* He does it continually, even in our local settings. We pray about the ministry meeting, and when we come home we say, He did more than we asked or thought; we could not have conceived that words like that would have been given. God is always acting like that, because He has this great vessel in view.

Ques. Is that also suggested in 1 Chronicles 29: 12, "Thou art exalted as head above all; and riches and glory are of thee, and thou rulest over everything; and in thy hand is power and might, and in thy hand it is to make all great and strong. And now, our God, we thank thee"?

G.R.C. It is a most encouraging word, "In thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make all great and strong";—it links with "the power which works in us". God makes all who form the assembly great and strong to fill out their part in such a vessel.

J.P.H. Would you be free to compare the language in 1 Chronicles 29, "Thou are exalted as head above all", with 1 Corinthians 15, "God all in all"?

G.R.C. I would think there is a link, because 1 Corinthians 15: 28 says, "the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him". I would think that would link on with the thought of "Thou art exalted as head above all". And then it goes on, "that God may be all in all". It is where the headship of God is recognised without challenge that this blessed

state of things will be actually brought about, and it is to be brought about now if there is a state and condition for it.

F.D.W. I wondered if "all" would link our minds with His headship, and "in all" the power to respond to it.

G.R.C. Yes. "All" as object, you mean. I think so. He is "*all in all*"—a wonderfully close expression.

J.F.G. Have you a word to say in regard to 2 Chronicles 5?

G.R.C. I do not think we need to say much about it. It does bear on what has been said as to unity in our localities. It has a wider bearing, we know; but it says, "it came to pass when the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one voice to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice with trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised Jehovah; for he is good, for his loving-kindness endureth for ever; that then the house, the house of Jehovah, was filled with a cloud." It seems to indicate how the being filled to all the fulness of God comes about. These persons were so under the headship of Christ typically, under the influence of the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge, which is represented in Solomon in all his active love, that they were brought into complete unity in the service and praise of God, and the house was filled. Typically they were filled to all the fulness of God.

## IMAGE

Address by Mr. W. W. SMART

Colossians 1: 12-16. 2 Corinthians 3: 17-18.  
Romans 8: 28-30. 1 Corinthians 15: 48-49

It will be clear from these scriptures that it is in mind to say a further word on the thought of image, there being a reference to that very matter in each of the passages now read. In the scripture in Colossians 1 we might view this matter in relation to the personal greatness and glory of Christ as Man, while in the passage in the epistle to the Romans we might look at the thought of image there as setting out the great thought that God has in mind for us, having this end in view, as it says, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". In referring to the passage in 2 Corinthians, it is thought to speak of image as indicating the standard to which we are to be transformed, as it says, "transformed according to the same image from glory to glory even as by the Lord the Spirit". And lastly the word in 1 Corinthians 15 is suggested to show the great and final end in view and which is now so near that we shall bear also the image of the heavenly (One).

And so I come back to this scripture in Colossians 1, having in mind what we said earlier today regarding this thought of image, that it involved the bringing in of man. For if the invisible God was to come into expression and into representation, then it assuredly involved the bringing in of man, and so I want to briefly refer to the coming in of Christ as Man; in other words, to speak of the holy incarnation—a matter which we must approach with the greatest reverence. I think I can understand Elijah remaining unmoved by a great and strong wind, which rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before Jehovah, for Jehovah was not in the wind. And likewise

his being unmoved by the presence of an earthquake, for Jehovah was not in it. And again, unmoved by the presence of a fire, for Jehovah was not in it. But when he heard a soft gentle voice, it says, "he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out". As impressed by the holy mystery of the incarnation, suggested in the soft, gentle voice, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle. Impressed, I say, by the mystery of the incarnation, he found fitting answer in the spirit of self-effacement. And so I trust in that same spirit, the spirit of self-effacement, we would now speak of this holy mystery: a mystery in which, I would remind you, God had *His* part, as the Lord Jesus could say prophetically, "But thou hast prepared me a body"—a mystery in which the Lord Jesus Himself had *His* part, as it says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"; and, may I add, a mystery in which the Spirit had *His* part, as the word to one was, "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee". And so I speak of this holy mystery, beloved brethren, not in the sense in which it may engage us on the coming day when we assemble to break bread, for the loaf, on which we are fully expected to look, is intended ever to impress us with the way the Lord Jesus, who as to His Person is over all, God blessed for ever, and as such we worship Him, came into such holy limitations by way of incarnation, that in love He might serve, that in love He might suffer, that in love He might die, and thus express a devotedness that would never turn aside. That I doubt not is the sense in which we may be impressed by it on the coming day, but I am thinking of the Lord Jesus coming into manhood, not in the setting of humiliation, nor in view of suffering, but coming into that condition, becoming Man, that the invisible God might come into expression, and I hasten to say this, that manhood is a glorious state with God. He regards it as a glorious state—Manhood.

And now to help us forward into the contemplation of the greatness and glory of Christ, as image of the invisible God, it would seem that the Father has so operated, as it says in the scriptures where we read, "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light". I am referring to this to show how the Father has operated—most attractively, most powerfully—

all in view of our being helped forward into the holy contemplation of the greatness and the glory of Christ, and that as Man. No doubt you have observed that in the epistle to the Colossians little or nothing is said concerning the Spirit, for I suppose in this epistle the Spirit virtually says throughout, "That is my master!" That is how He shines in this epistle as calling attention to the personal greatness and glory of Christ as Man. And so the Father has undertaken such powerful operations in order to set us in holy liberty to be engaged with Christ, with His own personal greatness and glory, and so it says, "who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light". Surely in this there is the suggestion of the holy associations of Hebron! See how attractive the Father is!—so operating as to make us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light. There should never be the slightest difficulty nor hesitancy with us in giving thanks to the Father; the range of His operations is so great, and so extensive, and so varied that we should never be at a loss to give thanks to the Father. And in so speaking I am not thinking merely of our being together in the service of God, but I am thinking of that word, as it says, "And everything, whatever ye may do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him." The Father has so wrought, He has operated so powerfully and attractively, as to give us cause for constant thanksgiving to Him in the name of the Lord Jesus. But then there is this further operation, as it says, "who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". This is still the Father's operations, having in mind that we should be entirely liberated in view of being wholly engaged with Christ personally, and so it says, "who has delivered us from the authority of darkness". I suppose what is stressed in that operation, that mighty operation, is the power of the Father, delivering us, as it says, from the authority of darkness; but then it adds, "and translating us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". And if the idea of delivering us from the authority of darkness stresses the power marking the Father in His operations, I would think this idea of His translating us into the kingdom of the Son of His love is a matter of holy pleasure,

for the very idea of translating involves the pleasure of the Father.

Not for a moment would I suggest that the thought of power is not present, but when we come to the idea of translation, the Father translating us, we are immediately impressed that this operation, powerful though indeed it is, yields peculiar pleasure to the Father, for those fit for translation are particularly delightful to the Father. You remember how it says concerning Enoch, speaking of this very matter of being pleasing, that "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him". Now it adds, "for before his translation he *has* the testimony that he *had* pleased God". I would like you to observe how it reads. It says that Enoch *has* the testimony; it is not a historical matter, he *has* the testimony that he *had* pleased God. He carried the sense of divine approval with him, and in translation he had a deepened sense of how pleasurable he was to God. The word is put in the present tense; it says he *has* the testimony—it goes through with him, so to speak. And so this great matter of the Father operating; making us fit, delivering us from the authority of darkness, stressing, I doubt not, His power, but now here, in a most attractive, alluring manner, impressing us with the peculiar pleasure it gives Him to translate us, as it says in the scriptures, "into the kingdom of the Son of his love". There is something so choice, something so appealing, something so attractive, in this expression, "the Son of his love". We have different types of the Lord Jesus in sonship—indeed we were referring to them today already. There is Isaac—"thine only son whom thou lovest" is the word spoken concerning him; then there is Joseph, of whom it says that he was loved more than all his brethren. And there is also Solomon; and you will remember how it says concerning him, "and he called his name Jedidiah, for Jehovah's sake".

But in Colossians no types are employed, because the Colossian epistle serves to bring before us the personal greatness and glory and distinctiveness and uniqueness of Christ, and on that account no type in itself is sufficient, because, as I have been remarking, the Spirit is impressing us in Colossians with the supreme distinctiveness and

uniqueness of Christ, and here He is referred to as “the Son of his love”. It speaks of what is peculiarly intimate, what is peculiarly blessed, what is peculiarly mutual, as we sing together, “What mutual glory known between the Father and the Son”. “The Son of his love” stresses the idea of holy intimacy between the Father and the Son, and holy love in all its secret intercourse holding sway. And the Father in His operations, so attractive, brings us into a realm where the One who is supreme in it is marked by this feature and disposition of holy love. It would seem that in this scripture we are being helped forward, and that by the operations of the Father, into the contemplation of the greatness of Christ. Given to share the portion of the saints in light, set free from the authority of darkness, our hearts stilled and satisfied by the consciousness of love, a love known in all its holy blessedness and intimacy between the Father and the Son, and then it adds, “in whom we have redemption”. Let us ever remember, that even though we may touch the height of the service, we are never to be without some sense of the depths that are involved, and I believe this allusion to the One in whom we have redemption is to emphasise the thought of depths with us. If I may be permitted to say, our difficulty is not so much in relation to the height, but our difficulty and weakness lie in the matter of depths, beloved brethren. Scripture speaks of a time when there were no depths, but with the incoming of Christ and His going into death we have depths unfathomable: and the more we contemplate the matter of depths, the more tone shall we bring into the service.

And so in 2 Chronicles 5, where I suppose we have the service at its height, at least at the highest point possible in the Old Testament, we read of certain ones who stood at the east end of the *altar*, and with them a hundred and twenty priests, and so it seems that this word “in whom we have redemption” is brought in in order to add depths to our souls, for we are never to be without some sense of the greatness of Christ as the One who is marked by depths. And thus the scripture goes on to say, “the forgiveness of sins”, and then it adds, “who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation”. We are now ready for the holy contemplation of the greatness and glory of

Christ: the Father has been operating, bringing us into a realm where the Son is supreme, the Son of His love, reminding us of this matter of depths, and now setting us free in our spirits to contemplate the personal greatness and glory of Christ as Man. And so it says of Him, "who is image of the invisible God". For God is *invisible*, yet, while so, while invisible, and in the sense of it, and in the light of it, we prostrate ourselves in holy reverence, He has come into expression, has come into representation in none other than Christ, and that as Man. I am sure such an impression as this is intended to give us deeper and holier and greater thoughts as to Christ personally. "Image of the invisible God" it says; the One who is invisible has come, in the person of Christ and that as Man, into full and perfect expression, for it says, "*image of the invisible God*". Perfect fulness, perfect completeness, and perfect expression are found in Christ as image of the invisible God.

But now this matter of image has its bearing upward, and with that in mind I read from this passage in Romans 8. It says, "But we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose." This, I am sure, is intended to be a very comforting and balancing word for us—*all things* it says; not a few, not those which appear favourable to us and which suit us so well, but all things include those very things which may and do prove to be most testing and most difficult for us. Yet it says in this scripture that all things work together for good; there is something peculiarly interesting in this word; *all things work together*! What we might regard as pleasant and unpleasant things; they do not work independently of one another, they work *together*, and that in a secret, hidden untraceable, mysterious way, yet combining towards one end, and that for good to those who love God. How a matter such as this would greatly help us in our outlook! Things are working with us, we may not understand them, they may not suit us well, but here they are working *together* in a mysterious hidden, untraceable way; we cannot trace what they do, but they are working together for one great and solitary end, and that is for good to those who love God, as it says, "But we do know that all things work together for

good to those who love God.” That is the object, that is the issue, that is the end to which all things are working, and then it adds, “to those who are called according to purpose”. Here it would seem there is a merging of the ways of God, so untraceable, with His purpose. All things working together in a mysterious way which we cannot unravel, and yet working together for good to those who love God, to those who are called, it says, “according to purpose”. These things so hard to solve, so difficult to bear, working in a way we cannot understand, yet combining with this great end in view that we should gain from them, as it says, “for good to those who love God”, and then it adds, “to those who are called according to purpose”.

Having touched this matter of purpose, it seems the writer goes on to call our attention to this idea of image, so he says, “because whom he has foreknown”. This is a matter beyond us, dear brethren—the foreknowledge of God; God, as it were, falling back upon Himself, in view of carrying out all that He has designed; His ways serving too, and then it goes on to say here, “because whom he has foreknown, he has also predestinated”. I suppose foreknowledge stands related more to the persons themselves, but when you come to the idea of predestination it is not so much the persons who are in mind but rather the place and the relationship which these persons will fill. This is a choice word used by the Spirit, and, may I remark, used most sparingly in the scriptures. We have it here, and we have the same word again in Ephesians 1, which we were considering this afternoon, where it says, “marked out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself”. So I suggest foreknowledge has the persons more in view, but when we come to predestination we are impressed with the place designed for those persons whom God has foreknown. Now the great end in our being marked out beforehand is indicated here, as it says, “to be conformed to the image of His Son”. What a dignified outlook this scripture would give us, for we are so often inclined to be limited and narrow in our outlook, and yet God, as it were, would give us to understand that in foreknowing us, and in predestinating us, He has in view that this feature of image should mark us, that we should be

like Christ, as it says, “conformed to the image of his Son”, and as was remarked this morning, the thought of intensification enters into this passage in Romans. But what is the great end?—not for our blessing only, though indeed that is involved, but rather, as it says, “so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren”. The idea of firstborn is not a matter of time, nor is it quite a matter of status in the setting in which we are viewing it here, but it seems the idea of firstborn in this passage is that Christ should be the *foremost*, that He should be the *pre-eminent* One, that He should be supreme and unrivalled among His brethren. Is there not something peculiarly attractive in this matter—that God, as it were, should fall back upon Himself in the way of foreknowledge, that He should predestinate us—mark us out beforehand! How this is intended to impress us—but with this end in view: that we should be conformed “to the image of his Son”, so that He, His Son, should be the firstborn among many brethren.

But then it goes on to speak of the matter in greater detail, as it says, “but whom he has predestinated, these also he has called, and whom he has called, these also he has justified”. You see, we are coming nearer—God moving out from Himself—first foreknowledge, then predestination, then the matter of the calling, then the matter of being justified—set up in the universe where no one can raise a voice against you, and then it goes on to say, “these also he has glorified”. I have the impression that in coming to this matter the Spirit is in mind, for to receive the Spirit is to be *morally* glorified. The fulness, the completeness of this matter of being glorified, we await; soon shall our bodies of humiliation, to which I will refer in a moment, be transformed, and that by the personal service of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it seems to me that here the very idea of bringing in “glorified” in the setting now before us is to give us an impression of what lies available for us in the Spirit. In this word there is a suggestion of the boards of the tabernacle being overlaid with gold; that is to say simply this: that in the power of the Spirit we come out in features which display qualities that are expressive of God in His own holy blessed character.

Having come to speak of the Spirit, I hasten now to refer to this word in 2 Corinthians 3, which we read together. It says in the last verse, "But *we* all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." It would appear in this section that the thought of image is introduced as setting out the standard to which we are to be transformed, which transformation comes about first by our looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and then in answer to the service of the Lord Spirit. Perhaps I might refer briefly to the service of God, in which, through grace, we may have our part on the coming day, and I should like to suggest how in that setting this word may have its bearing. It is readily owned, of course, that what is stressed here is the greatness of Christ as Mediator, totally eclipsing Moses, who, great as he was, could effect nothing in the people. But for the moment I want to say a word on this idea of looking on the glory of the Lord. It is not a question of looking on the Lord exactly, but looking on the *glory* of the Lord; it suggests to my mind that the Lord Jesus shines in a peculiar setting of glory. A certain phase or a certain setting of glory appears in which the Lord shines as we proceed in the service—that is what I have in mind. And as we look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, a transformation takes place—we do not accomplish it, we could not, but the Lord Spirit does; He carries it through with persons who are looking on the glory of the Lord. Perhaps I should make it clear that what I am saying is in no way mystical, nor unreal.

On the morrow perhaps one of these choice hymns may be given out, so helpful in the service, answering, it may be, to these harps and lutes which were made from the sandal-wood brought by the servants of Hiram and Solomon, and of which it says, "there were none such seen before in the land of Judah". So I think we might consider the hymns now available to us as answering to these harps and lutes made from the sandal-wood, which had no compare, and so, as I say, such a hymn may be given out tomorrow, and as we sing it together the glory of the Lord may come before us in a certain setting, and as we are engaged with the glory of the Lord, conveyed

to us in that setting, transformation takes place, “according to the same image”, it says, even as by the Lord Spirit. What I am trying to convey is this: suppose a hymn is given out tomorrow calling attention to the glory of the Lord Jesus as the firstborn among many brethren—that leaves its own impression on our hearts; and as we sing it together we behold the glory of the Lord in that setting, and we are affected by it, and the Spirit brings about a transformation in us, that as we behold that particular outshining of glory in the Lord Jesus we take on similar features—according to the *same image*, the scripture says. We take on features similar to His. He comes before us in a certain setting of glory, and we behold Him, and by the Spirit’s power we come out in the same features that mark Him. As I say He comes before us, it may be, as the firstborn of many brethren, and as we look at Him thus, behold His glory thus, the Spirit brings about a transformation in us so that we take on features suited to Him as brethren. We are like Him. Or it may be in another setting, for the glory changes, and we are to be marked by that spiritual perception and that holy alacrity and agility in order to move when the change takes place. It may be that He comes before us in the setting of the Lover of the assembly, and as we look on the glory of the Lord in that setting we are greatly affected thereby, and the Spirit, and that as *Lord*, brings about a transformation. He develops in us, by reason of our looking on the glory of the Lord, features and feelings which are wholly in keeping with Himself, on whose glory we have gazed; and so, if it be, He comes before us as the Lover of the assembly, I believe we are so affected by that glory that, by the Spirit, we take on features which are suited to union, for Christ will never be united save to that which is not only for Himself but *like* Himself and *of* Himself. But the transformation is from glory to glory, as it says, “according to the same image, from glory to glory”—it is an upward way. I have been referring to the sandal-wood which those servants of Solomon and Hiram brought to the king and with which he made harps and lutes, the like of which were never seen before in the land of Judah; but with that same sandal-wood he also made stairs for the house of Jehovah, indicating an upward trend, and so the word here is “from

glory to glory". The Lord may therefore come before us in another setting, and indeed, as we were remarking this afternoon, He may come before us in the glory of the true Solomon. Most impressive glory! And I have this impression, that as we behold the glory of the Lord as the true Solomon in all His greatness, the Spirit transforms us, that we are ready for the worship of God as God. For God is to be worshipped so.

And now let me close with this final word from 1 Corinthians 15. It says in the part where we read, "As we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One." This, as you will observe, is put in the future; that we have borne the image of the one made of dust is perfectly patent to all, but the glorious hope before us, and so soon to be fulfilled, is surely conveyed in this word, as it says, "we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One". Our only link with this scene, beloved brethren, is this body of humiliation, and we are oft reminded that it is a body of humiliation, but it is to come under the personal service and touch of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, as the word in Philippians 3 says, "from which"—that is, from the heavens—"also we wait the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory". There is something delightfully appealing in this matter, that the final service is to be carried through by our Lord Jesus Christ as *Saviour*—mark you, *as Saviour*. The One whom we knew at the first, the One who served us at the first, and who has served us throughout, will assuredly serve us at the end, and that *as Saviour*. The One we have learned to love, the One on whom we have relied, reserves for Himself this final service, this last touch to our salvation; it says, "shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory". It is a matter of profound thankfulness to me to think that the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour has reserved this final service to Himself; One we have known so long. "So faithful known, long proved in secret help" (as one has said) is the One who is to serve us at the end. As the sense of this bears upon us—the body of humiliation about to be transformed, and we about to bear the image of the heavenly—surely our outlet is in worshipping God,

and God as known. In Deity unknown and unknowable, but in revelation, known and loved and served and worshipped for ever: as the Father, blest source of all; as the Son, blest sustainer of all; as the Spirit, blest pervader of all. God eternally—known and loved for ever. As we speak thus, a deep and holy calm fills our souls, and as we think of His ways, untraceable though they are, we say, “for of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever”. But when we think of the purposes of His love framed in counsel deep, we say, and say it now, “To him”—that is, to God—“be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.”

May the Lord bless the word.

## SON OF MAN, SON OF ABRAHAM, SON OF DAVID

Address by MR. G. R. COWELL

Genesis 3: 14-15; 22: 15-18. Psalm 132: 1-5.  
2 Corinthians 1: 19-20

I have read a number of scriptures, dear brethren, but I have three thoughts in my mind: and that is to speak of the Lord Jesus as the Son of man, as the Son of Abraham and as the Son of David. In all those aspects of His manhood He was the subject of promise. Although the words read in Genesis 3 were said to the serpent, they came in the nature of a promise to mankind, and refer to the Lord Jesus as the Son of man, "he shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush his heel". Then Abraham was promised a seed in and through whom the blessing was to come, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves". The blessing was to come through the Son of Abraham. Thirdly, God promised David a son who would build God's house, and God said, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"—the glorious Son of David! And the passage we have read in the New Testament says that whatever promises of God there are, the yea and amen is in the Son of God, and that is the truth. No mere son of man could have fulfilled the promise of Genesis 3; the great truth is that the Son of man is the Son of God. No mere son of Abraham could have fulfilled the promise of blessing which was made to Abraham; the great truth is that the Son of Abraham is the Son of God. And no mere son of David could have built God's habitation; the truth is that the Son of David is the Son of God. So that whatever promises of God there are, in Him is the yea and in Him the amen for glory to God by us. The word to Mary in Luke is "That holy thing that shall be born shall be called Son of God";

and it is made clear that the Person coming in was God Himself—"a Saviour, who is Christ Jehovah". The Son of God is God Himself in manhood. What a marvellous truth that God Himself has come into manhood to fill out His promises; therefore they cannot fail, whatever promises of God there are; in Him is the yea and in Him the amen for glory to God by us. It is a great thing to lay hold of the truth of the incarnation. In the first chapter of Luke it says the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, for He is the Son of David, but it is also said, "that holy thing which shall be born shall be called Son of God".

The matter of promise stands related to purpose; but whereas purpose refers to what God has determined for His own pleasure and satisfaction, promises are those elements of purpose, if I might use such a word, which faith requires to encourage it. And so God has graciously made promises right from the beginning of time. It is a proof of His love that God makes promises to encourage faith. As soon as sin came in He promised that there should be a son of man who would crush the serpent's head. What a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus has come in, and in Him, as we have said, God Himself has come in to deal with this matter, but it must be met in *man*. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and the disaster could only be retrieved in man; the challenge could only be met by man—it necessitated the incarnation. Unless it could be met in a man, then all God's purposes as to man would come to nought. The word was, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But disaster had come in, the challenge and the disaster must be met in and by a man, and God immediately promised that Man, because He had the Man in reserve, the Son of God. He was to come, born of a woman, "when the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son, come of a woman". Marvellous thing! It should affect our hearts to think of the lowliness of the way Jesus came and the grace on His part to take up man's case for God's glory when we were absolutely helpless and powerless; sin having come into the world and death by sin, we could do nothing about it at all. What wonderful grace that the Lord Jesus should come as Son of man, to

take up man's case before God, and to meet it all for the glory of God. So that referring to His death He could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." He was going to take up the whole of man's case, and represent man in his fallen condition before God and deal with the whole matter, at infinite cost to Himself, to God's glory. In that the Son of man was glorified; it was an amazing display of moral glory in a man, that He should be prepared to go that way, that He should be prepared to be lifted up. The wonderful thing is, that He continually speaks of Himself under this title. Others do not, for faith looked on, faith recognised the Son of David, and confessed Him as such. But the Lord Jesus says, "the Son of man". "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." The Son of David will be ministered unto; royal splendour belongs to Him and thousands upon thousands will minister to Him. But the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give His life a ransom for many. A foundation had to be laid before the glory of the Son of David could come in. It was the only way in which the position could be retrieved—to minister and to give His life; that was the end of His ministry: to give His life. How much are we prepared to give for the saints and for God's glory? That is where His ministry ended. We may think that there is a certain glamour attached to ministry, but the end of ministry with the Lord Jesus was to give His life. Nothing else that He ministered would have been effective if He had not gone all that way, and given His life a ransom for many. Blessed Son of man! And how great the results have been! "He shall crush thy head." The attack of Satan was a well-devised attack; think of Satan coming in this form, the form of a serpent, that old serpent, the devilish wisdom that marks the old serpent. Satan had his plan, but the way the Son of man has gone has crushed his head. All Satan's plans have been thrown into confusion, never to be retrieved, so that God's plans might go forward without let or hindrance. "He shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush his heel." The Lord suffered, but He was not detained on His way, it was only His heel. The sufferings were real, unfathomed, but the Lord was not detained; the atoning sufferings, as it were, were

taken in His course, in the course of His path of obedience to the Father's will ; but He has crushed the serpent's head ; Satan's plans are for ever defeated, and God's plans are going through. Blessed Son of man! How much we owe to Him! So that all God's thoughts and purposes as to Man stand, nothing has broken down, God's eternal purpose as to man stands, not simply what He had in mind as to Adam personally, but the greater thoughts that God had in mind as to the Son of man are now established in Christ, in His headship over all things.

Now I pass on to the Son of Abraham. With Abraham *blessing* is connected, "surely blessing I will bless thee", and the greatest blessing, I suppose, that God has for man is sonship. Blessing, sonship, the family, are all connected with Abraham. The Son of Abraham is the Son of God, and not only that, but He is the only-begotten Son. What comes to light in Abraham and Isaac is the truth typically of the Father and the Son, and it is in that connection that the blessing comes to us, the blessing that God has in His mind for men. God's thought is to fill heaven and earth with families, every family is to know sonship in its measure, and if the blessing of Abraham was to come to us it involved what God says to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him up for a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will tell thee of." In this type the affections of the Father and the Son are brought out. What it meant to the Father and to the Son to take that journey together, as the scripture says, "thine only son . . . whom thou lovest". How Abraham loved that son, but God in speaking to Abraham was looking on to a time when He would take such a journey Himself, when He would have here His only Son, whom He loved. It awaited the incarnation for God to be known as the Father. The Person we know as the Father, one would judge, could hardly take that name until the Son was here, and yet it is in that relationship that the most precious affections connected with God Himself have come into expression. As we were considering this morning, John says as to the Lord Jesus, "We have contemplated his glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a father." There is the double glory there, the glory of the Only-Begotten, and the glory of the

Father. There is a glory attaching to both. We can well contemplate the glory of the Only-Begotten; what affection, what obedience, what devotion to His Father's will, what holy communion, as with Abraham and Isaac! Isaac says, "My father", and he says, "Here am I, my son." How precious the communion between the Father and the only-begotten Son! But then scripture speaks, too, of the glory of the Father, and the coming in of Christ has brought out the glory of the Father. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. The glory of the Father has to be distinguished from the glory of God. The glory of God stands related to the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being, specially coming into display in dealing with the sin question, but bringing out what is there in God Himself, that God is light, and God is love. But the glory of the Father links with the purposes of divine love—with affections in God, which could not be satisfied apart from family relationships, tender, intimate, affectionate relationships. So that the Lord Jesus came into manhood, the Word became flesh, in order that these tender and affectionate relationships might come into display. The love of God requires nothing in its object to draw it out, for God *is* love. But there are also affections in God which have found expression in the love of the Father, which could only come into display in the presence of an Object adequate for them. In the only-begotten Son here there was an Object adequate for these affections, and so the Father came into view in relation to His only-begotten Son. The Father has become known and the riches of His glory have shone out—the One who will fill heaven and earth with families named of Himself. The affections which rest with such satisfaction on the Son embrace now all those taken into favour in the Beloved, and will, in some measure, extend to all the families named of the Father. God delights in these families. He says to Abraham in Genesis 12, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"—all the families. And we know that now it is not only a question of earthly families, but of heavenly. How marvellous the promise of a Son to Abraham; the One who, coming, would bring in the blessing of sonship, through whom families will fill heaven and earth, families named of the Father, brought into such

tender relationship. And of course the assembly is the nearest and most blest of all the families, the first of all the families—the assembly of the firstborn—so that the Lord Jesus says, “I go to prepare a place for *you*, that where I am there ye may be also.” That is the place of the assembly viewed as a family. What a place we have in the Father’s house! The first of all the families. What blessing has come in through the Son of Abraham!

Now I pass on to the third title, the Son of David. These titles are cumulative. God says of David, “I have found David, the son of Jesse, a *man* after my heart”, so that we must carry forward what is connected with the Son of man into this, “who shall do all my will”. And God says, “I will make him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth”, so that we must carry manhood and sonship into the truth of the Son of David. The Son of David, that is Solomon, is peculiarly a type of Christ as Son, as we know; yet in David and Solomon—and we must view them together as a type—*manhood* is seen in its glorious character. God’s greatest thoughts as to man, as far as the types go, come into expression. It says of David, “a man after my heart, who will do all my will”. What is all God’s will? It is certainly God’s will that the challenge should be met and that the serpent’s head should be crushed, but that is not *all* God’s will. It is certainly God’s will that heaven and earth should be filled with families named of the Father, but that is not *all* God’s will. What is involved in *all* God’s will? There may be other things, but what is involved in it is the formation or building of the *assembly* as the habitation of God; the bringing in of a vessel adequate for the display of the glory and greatness of God. And that is what marks David. “Jehovah, remember for David all his affliction; how he swore unto Jehovah, vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob.” As far as a type could be, David is a type of the perfect Man. Perfection in man lies first and foremost in this, that he considers, before everything else, for his God. He is willing for complete self-effacement, the greatest self-abnegation for the sake of his God.

That is perfection in man, seen in its fulness, alone in Jesus. It involves the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; His love for His God. David and Solomon are a type of Christ, the Anointed. It is the glorious state of man that is before us here. The Son of man coming in lowliness to meet the challenge, to crush the serpent's head, is one thing; but now we have Man in glory, the Christ, the Anointed of God, the true David. Thousands upon thousands minister to this great and glorious Person, the glorious Man, the glorified Man.

But then, think of the love of the Christ. The Christ is the perfect Man, and therefore the primary feature of the love of the Christ is His love for His God. Even in human affairs if a man loves his wife more than his God that would be idolatry, that would not be perfection in a man. But the Christ is the perfect Man, and the love of the Christ is the love of a perfect Man, and therefore first and foremost it is His love for His God, "I love my master, my wife, and my children"—a perfect love which flows in all directions. But what we see in David is love for his God. He swore and vowed to the mighty God of Jacob, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob." What a man David was! But yet he was only a feeble figure of the One who was to come, the Lord Jesus, the Man entirely devoted to His God, who would find a place for His God, a habitation. And so we find in the twenty-second psalm, a Psalm of David, the depths to which the Lord Jesus went as the Son of David, "My God, my God," He says, "why hast thou forsaken me?" You may say to me, I thought that was His atoning sufferings for me. That is true, but there is more than that in it. It is His atoning sufferings for God's sake; it is what He was doing for God. "My God, my God," He says, "why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me?" Sins are not mentioned in this psalm as far as I see. I am not saying He was not abandoned because of sins, but that is not the point. *The point is the depths to which He went for His God.* "Thou art holy, O thou that dwellest amidst the praises of Israel." That is why He was there, from the standpoint of this psalm. Not simply to work atonement for you and for me, *He was there for His*

*God*, and this shows the extent of His devotion to His God, the One who would at all costs secure a place for God, habitations for the Mighty God of Jacob.

Where will God find His habitations? "O thou that dwellest amidst the praises of Israel." He would secure a vessel of praise, worthy of God in all His greatness as God. What a wonderful type! What wonderful language David expresses, language which can only, in the full sense, belong to Christ! It is worth reading this psalm, dear brethren, from the standpoint of what the perfect Man did for His God. And as soon as He comes forth from death He says, "I will declare thy name to my brethren." What name? The name of His God! It involves the name of the Father, but it is not limited to that. "My Father and your Father." That is the Abraham side of things, it connects with the Son of Abraham, really. It is the blessing, the intimacy, the family. But "My God and your God" involves the assembly, *the vessel* of God's glory and service and praise. He has secured the assembly for God.

But then, you see, David and Solomon secure the assembly in a practical way, because they are so lovable; they are typical of Christ as the Beloved. David's name means beloved. Jedidiah means the beloved of Jehovah. They were beloved men. Think of a man who could write the Song of Songs. The Song of Songs is full of the King, for the Beloved *is* the King. In other words, the Beloved is the Christ, He is the head. The spouse delights in Him as the King. He is head over all things to her. That is the idea of the Song of Solomon as applied to us, what the King is to the assembly. Psalm 45, a song of the Beloved, also brings out what the King is to the assembly and what the assembly is to the King. But you see we have to let things merge. We cannot carry one type too far, for one type merges into another. There are women who are types of the assembly, in connection with David and Solomon, but then the type merges into the assembly of Israel. They come to David and say, "We are thy flesh and thy bones." He became the beloved of the whole assembly of Israel. In a coming day, Israel will again be marked by affections like that for Christ Himself, and the Song of Solomon, in measure, will be taken up by Israel. The Lord Jesus will become their Beloved, and so, you see, the thought of the

spouse merges into the whole assembly of Israel, and what influence David and Solomon secured over the whole assembly of Israel. Under the influence of their love the whole assembly became tributary to God and the service of God. Why? Because they were under the influence of the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, as typified in the love of those two men, David and Solomon. And then if you merge the types further the assembly becomes the house that Solomon built; because if you come to the anti-type, the assembly *is* the house. There is the assembly viewed in its personnel, but the assembly also forms the very habitation of God. So we have to let these things merge into one another in our thoughts, and the One who is the true Son of David has brought all to pass. He has found a place for His God, a habitation, for the assembly is the habitation of God in the Spirit. He has formed the assembly for God, as a place for God. There is a place *for us* in the Father's house, but what about a place *for God*? David says, "The palace is not for man but for Jehovah Elohim, it must be exceeding great in fame and beauty in all lands." The true David has secured such a vessel—the assembly. But while He has laid the foundation for it in His death according to Psalm 22, it is through the power and influence of His active love, the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, that all is gathered up for God. The ark is enshrined in the house, and all the response gathered up for God.

What a wonderful type David is, and it is in connection with that type that the assembly's heart is enraptured and engaged. The final word of the Lord is "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." We say "Come" to that blessed perfect Man who ever considered for His God. He is the Man of our hearts. He ravishes our hearts, He is the Beloved, and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.

May God grant that the Christ may be enshrined in our hearts, that the Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we, being rooted and founded in love, may apprehend with all saints the length and breadth and depth and height, and to know the love of the Christ, and be in the

current of it, the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge, and so be filled to all the fulness of God. May we be so available that, even in our local settings, there may be a place for God, and a vessel of service worthy and adequate, in some measure at any rate, for God, in all His greatness—Christ's God. How He loves His God, how He is considering for His God, how He would have us consider for His God, and all that is due to His God.

May He help us for His Name's sake.

## THE ASSEMBLY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

### READING (1)

Matthew 28: 19. Acts 1: 1-16, 26; 2: 1-4, 14-18, 32,  
33, 38-42, 46, 47

G.R.C. It is suggested that our theme throughout the five readings should be the assembly in the book of Acts, culminating in chapter 20, where Paul speaks of the assembly of God which He has purchased with the blood of His own.

We have begun with Matthew 28: 19 because it brings in the full Name of God as now declared, to which we have all been baptised, and to which, in a peculiar way, the assembly stands related. The assembly both apprehends and responds to the declaration of God in a much fuller way than any other creature vessel. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, as approaching the subject of the assembly, to have in our minds the name of God as declared. It comes in the assembly gospel and the words are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself. But while in Matthew 28 He brings out the full name of God as declared, in Acts 1 He greatly stresses the Person of the Holy Spirit; and you will remember that in Luke 24 His last words before leaving His own relate to the Holy Spirit. He says, "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you" (Luke 24: 49). So that according to Matthew 28, Luke 24 and Acts 1 the apostles were left with a very powerful objective presentation of the Holy Spirit. While the Lord Jesus in Acts 1 presents Himself living and also gives the Father fully the place that is His, yet He puts *great* stress upon the Holy Spirit, and we have to remember that He is dealing with what is foundational to the assembly. The names of the men to whom He is speaking appear

in this chapter and their names appear in Revelation 21 on the foundations of the city. So the Lord is dealing with what is foundational, and therefore it is important from that standpoint to consider the stress the Lord puts upon the Holy Spirit, because we shall never understand the assembly at all apart from an appreciation of the Holy Spirit. So at the beginning of this chapter it says, "having by the Holy Spirit charged the apostles whom he had chosen" (verse 2)—He would leave them with an impression that everything they were to do was to be by the Holy Spirit. The whole charge that He committed to them was to be maintained in the power of the Holy Spirit alone; nothing was to be done except by the Holy Spirit. They were to shut out every other thought from their minds in the matter of activity relative to the assembly. Then He says, "For John indeed baptised with" (or in) "water, but ye shall be baptised with" (or in) "the Holy Spirit after now not many days." In water baptism we are baptised 'to' the Holy Spirit, but here He speaks of being baptised 'in' the Holy Spirit, which John himself had borne witness to.

R.W. Is that why in John great stress is laid upon the Spirit's coming, "that he may be with you for ever" (John 14: 16), and then Paul labouring as he did in the Corinthian epistles, reminding them that their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit and developing the idea of the Spirit dwelling in them in view of the service of God and the truth of the assembly being understood?

G.R.C. The apostle lays great stress in 1 Corinthians on the Holy Spirit. The more we think of it, the more we can see that the very existence of the assembly depends upon the presence of the Holy Spirit. There would not be such a vessel had the Holy Spirit not come.

H.P. Is there any significance in the fact that in the typical scripture, Exodus 23, prior to the setting up of the tabernacle, great stress is laid upon the place the Angel should have, of whom it says, "my name is in him" (verse 21)?

G.R.C. It is an interesting suggestion as bearing on our subject. And so the Lord here lays great stress on the Holy Spirit in view of the setting up of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.

E.C.L. Would you say a word about the end of Luke, the idea of power from on high? I wondered if there has been difficulty in some minds as to the place the Spirit has because they think only of power instead of the Person of the Godhead with power.

G.R.C. The Lord says, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you" (Luke 24: 49) and instructs them "to await the promise of the Father" (Acts 1: 4). The idea of promise is carried forward by Peter in Acts 2: 33, "Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit." The Lord says much in His ministry as to the blessedness of the Father. He mentions the name of the Father about one hundred times in John's gospel and about forty times in Matthew. If we want to learn about the Father fully we have to go to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself and the more we appreciate the blessedness of the Father, the more we shall value His promise. The apostles would await with keen expectation the promise of the Father, the Father Himself being so blessed. If an earthly father promises something to his children with what anticipation they await the fulfilment of the promise. All that the Lord had told them of the Father would lead them to await the coming of the Holy Spirit with great expectation.

F.W.T. Would they know the actual day on which to expect this, according to Leviticus 23: 16? They were to count fifty days.

Ques. I was thinking of the word in Luke, "till ye be clothed with power from on high"—the idea of being clothed. Does it not suggest that every member and every servant is completely covered so that all that appears is the Holy Spirit?

G.R.C. Quite so. Each allusion of the Lord to the Holy Spirit carries its own instruction; first in Matthew as to His co-equality in Deity—"the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". There is the right order in that Name, but nevertheless the name implies co-equality in Deity, an objective view of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of Christian experience lies in accepting the truth of baptism, involving this objective view of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. But then in

Luke the Lord gives another touch as to being clothed with power *from on high*, not power from below. We have to beware of the democratic principle in our Care Meetings. Power according to God is from on high.

A.H. The co-equality that you referred to is subsisting equality?

G.R.C. It is, so that while they would await with keen anticipation the promise of the Father, which suggests all the blessing that would flow into their souls through the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were also to understand that the One coming was no less than a Person of the God-head; coming in all the greatness of His Person and His own rights.

G.F.S. Would you be free to say a little more as to the democratic principle with regard to the Care Meeting?

G.R.C. We have to guard against power from beneath which would be Satanic. The democratic principle—power from below—makes way for that. The world is governed today largely on the principle of power from below; but the Lord says, ye shall “be clothed with power from on high”.

G.H.B. Is Matthew 28: 19 sufficient to command our worship and praise to the Holy Spirit personally?

G.R.C. I am sure it is. It is the name of God as declared, as I understand it. It is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Jehovah of the Old Testament in the full sense is the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each is separately called Jehovah in the New Testament (see 2 Cor. 6: 18; Luke 2: 11; 2 Cor. 3: 18). The Father is Jehovah, the Son is Jehovah and the Spirit is Jehovah. Therefore the full name that corresponds with Jehovah of the Old Testament is the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that Name demands our worship; and also each Person—because the Persons are referred to separately—demands our worship.

W.S.S. I was thinking of what is said about the promise of the Father. Should that not touch our affections? There is no doubt that that is very much like the Father sending the Son. How our affections are touched by that; and is it not necessary for us to come into these things by means of our affections?

G.R.C. It does indeed touch our affections. The Father has done the very best for us.

C.R.W. I do not feel that we have fully entered into the glory and wonder of the Father's gift. Christ was here personally, but He was not available to His people in the same way that the Spirit is now available to the saints as His body. Would you agree with that?

G.R.C. I would. So the Lord says, "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you" (John 16: 7). We are in a day that is marked by the very best, the Father has sent the Son; but then the crowning matter is that the Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit.

W.S.S. I have been greatly impressed with the thought of the Father sending the Son. Now we need to be impressed with the thought of the Father sending the Spirit.

G.R.C. And then also to be impressed with the greatness of the Spirit in His own Person.

A.H. No position a Divine Person is pleased to take in humiliation could ever affect His own Person, and are we not to have that adoringly in our hearts?

G.R.C. Exactly. The first and second of Acts, as well as Matthew 28: 19, would help us to have a great appreciation of the Person of the Holy Spirit. Our brother has referred to the type of the Angel of God's presence who went before the children of Israel. They were to be careful in his presence. And how careful we should be in view of the greatness of the Person who is with us and dwelling in us.

Eu.R. Is the end of verse 8 of chapter 1 important in that connection? Is the Spirit's coming attributed to His own act—"ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you"?

G.R.C. We must ever keep before our souls the greatness of the Person of the Spirit that He never ceases to be who He is in the Deity.

C.C.I. Would the expression "the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father" (John 15: 26) be expressive of His own prerogative and His moving in His own volition?

G.R.C. I think that. While He has come to us in virtue of Jesus being glorified and therefore He takes the place

of being sent by the glorified Man, for on moral grounds He could not have come to dwell in us apart from the finished work of Christ and His consequent glorification, yet that does not alter the truth of His Person. He goes forth from with the Father; He is co-equal with the Father.

C.W.O'L.M. Referring to your remark that the Father would do the best for us in the gift of the Spirit, is not that a primary thought of the Father and Son, sending the Spirit that They might have response to Themselves?

G.R.C. The response is certainly secured by the sending of the Spirit. But in the way the Lord speaks in John He is sent for *our* sakes as the Comforter and to guide us into all the truth. So the Lord says that it is profitable for us that He should go away so that the Comforter should come to us. Yet, as you say, it is through the Spirit's service that all response in the assembly towards God is secured.

J.P.H. The rightness and appropriateness of worshipping the Spirit lies in the truth of His own Person, who He is?

G.R.C. And we should be concerned, should we not, according to verse 2, to do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit? He should be the source of all thought and word and action in the assembly.

A.B. Is it not affecting that the Lord Jesus Himself, after He had risen from the dead, even on the day when He was taken up, charged them *by the Holy Spirit*? Would He not be an example in that way?

G.R.C. He would. We are confronted at the present time with evangelical activities with which are linked methods and associations which are not of the Holy Spirit, so that it is well to remind ourselves that the divine thought in this dispensation is that every feature of the testimony should be carried through wholly and entirely in the power of the Holy Spirit; that He should be the source of *every* thought, *every* word and *every* action; that there should be no admixture of any kind in the bringing in of worldly methods. You could not think of these heavenly men in Acts bringing a single Egyptian method into the praises of God or the testimony of God. In chapter 2 the company as a whole speak as the Spirit gave them to speak forth. Then Peter standing up with the eleven

speaks forth. But there is no admixture of any worldly method at all, the whole matter is entirely in the power of the Spirit.

F.W.B. Is that confirmed by chapter 1: 16, when Peter speaks about the scripture being fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke?

G.R.C. That is why I suggested that verse being read. Does it not show the effect of the Lord's words upon the apostles that Peter should say this? The Holy Spirit had become a living *Person* to Peter although he had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Through the Lord's words the Spirit was objectively before Peter's soul in such a manner that he speaks of the scripture being fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David. The Holy Spirit personally was thus before Peter's soul and, in result, the scriptures had a place they had never had before in his soul.

W.J.T. Does scripture confirm that—"Holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1: 21)?

G.R.C. Quite so.

W.W.S. Is it not an evidence of spirituality when we are able to refer to what the Holy Spirit may say? In verse 1 attention is called to Jesus and in verse 2 to the Holy Spirit, stressing the great need for spirituality.

E.C.L. Would not the verse referred to, and also the way the Lord Jesus came in and went out amongst His own, be the way we should look for things to be done if the Holy Spirit is given His place? You were referring to the methods used in evangelisation. Do you think we have to be governed by the way the Lord moved and the way He is moving if the Spirit is going to take us on?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right.

W.J.T. You spoke in prayer of the Spirit of God taking every place given to Him in Christendom to continue His sovereign operations in grace. Would you enlarge on that a little?

G.R.C. I think it endears the Holy Spirit to us, that He should be prepared to take whatever place is given to Him, however small it may be, and to go on patiently with His work in Christendom generally. However much things are brought in to grieve Him, He will still pursue

His patient work; but that must not in any way cause us to fail to recognise what is due to Him in the assembly. Our concern would be, as of the assembly, to give Him His *full* place, allowing no admixture at all. The assembly's very existence depends upon the fact that the Holy Spirit has come; and every motive, thought, word and action should find its source in this blessed Person.

A.J.R. In Acts 5 there is a challenge in the admixture that Ananias brings in. Is that why Peter says, "Why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit"?

G.R.C. At the beginning any admixture was judged unsparingly.

H.J.M. Do you think this objective view of the Spirit which you have been presenting would help us to be prepared to wait for His movements and direction? Would waiting upon Him be continuous in the assembly? And would the Lord's ministry relative to the kingdom of God (verse 3) help us to make room for the Spirit?

G.R.C. I think so, because the truth of the kingdom as known at the present time really involves the Spirit having His place in all the saints individually. According to Romans 8, God secures the believer fully for Himself in virtue of the presence and indwelling of the Spirit. And so it says, "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14: 17).

H.J.M. I was thinking of the subjection that the kingdom would produce in us, so that we would be ready to accept things as they are presented to us by the Spirit.

G.R.C. I think that is right. The kingdom of God involves that we are secured individually as vessels of the Spirit and thus we are ready for the assembly. We need the truth of Romans, therefore, in order to be available for the truth of Corinthians.

D.S.H. Have you something more in mind as to the difference between being baptised "*to* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and being baptised *with* the Holy Spirit?

G.R.C. The first is water baptism, we are baptised "*to* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", but here the Lord says, "ye shall be baptised

with" (or *in*) "the Holy Spirit after now not many days". Is not baptism in the Holy Spirit fundamental to the truth of the assembly? Does it not show how fundamental the truth of the Spirit is to the formation and constitution of the assembly?

D.S.H. Does it connect with our being merged together?

G.R.C. It does, and I think it implies that we are all moving in the current of the Spirit; we are baptised *in* the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12: 13).

H.B. Is there not something very positive about that?

G.R.C. It is a very positive matter because we are all baptised in one Spirit. That is how the one body comes into being. You can understand what a reality the body is, as all the saints are in the flow of the Spirit and immersed in it.

H.B. Is that not what we want to get all the saints into, this positive current?

G.R.C. It is indeed. And Paul says, we "have all been given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12: 13). There is drinking as well, meaning that I open my inwards. I have no reserves as merged with the brethren; I have no reserved compartments—I open my inwards to the Spirit. I think drinking implies that.

W.S.S. Would you say a word as to verse 5 and its link with verse 8, "ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you"?

G.R.C. Verse 8 has the testimonial position in mind. Verse 5 is really the formation of the assembly, what is constitutional to the assembly. We are baptised in the Holy Spirit. That is how the body is formed. But then alongside of that, and complementary to it, is the idea that we receive power, the Spirit having come upon us. We are baptised or immersed in the Spirit, but then the public position is that the Spirit has come *upon us* and we thus receive power to do all that is needed in the testimony.

E.J.B. Are these two sides linked with verses 2 and 3 of chapter 2? Verse 2, "filled all the house", verse 3, "sat upon each one of them". I was thinking of what you were saying as to the formation of the assembly. The filling of

the house would be more inward, and then sitting upon each one would secure them all in this same power, the power of the Spirit.

G.R.C. It would, and so in chapter 2 further features are in evidence. First there is what is heard, "a sound out of heaven", then what is seen, "parted tongues, as of fire", and then, I think we may say, what is felt, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit". In result the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off; indeed a greater joy than had ever been known in Jerusalem before. So the mockers say, "They are full of new wine."

G.F.S. You have spoken of what is inward on our side. Does the violent impetuous blowing involve what is inward from God's side?

G.R.C. There came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of hard breathing (see J.N.D.'s note). I think it suggests the inwards of God, the inward feelings of God; and how He would breathe into and thus take possession of them in the highest way. The human organs are used as figures to help us. The idea of the lungs being filled is to convey spiritually the imparting of life in the highest sense, involving power of intelligent response Godward and testimony manward. Then there is the idea of the lower organs being filled with new wine. We need wine to stimulate us and give us joy and strength in testimony, but first of all there is hard breathing. Does it not indicate how God Himself in the Spirit was waiting for this moment. All through the Old Testament God was waiting for this moment, and now the time had come and here was a suitable vessel formed through the ministry of Christ Himself. The *feelings* of God enter into this. There was hard breathing. The moment God had waited for had come; there was "a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22).

W.W.S. You referred to what was heard and seen and felt. Might that suggest, speaking reverently, the substantiality of the Spirit as a distinctive Personality?

G.R.C. That is very good. Why should we not know something now of the deep feelings of God in the Spirit?

E.J.F. Would you say a word as to the parted tongues of fire? Does it raise with us the question of holiness if we are to enjoy what the presence of the Spirit really means?

G.R.C. It does. And does it not show the importance of the tongue, and that the tongue should be controlled? The tongue is the unruly member, and thus if the tongue is controlled the whole man will be under control and secured for God. The Spirit is given not only to control us in other ways but to make the tongue the most serviceable of our members, because the tongue is the most important member in the service of God. David said, "Awake my glory; awake lute and harp" (Ps. 57: 8). "My glory" appears to be a reference to his tongue (see Ps. 16: 9 and Acts 2: 26).

F.W.T. Stephen's tongue was serviceable. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

G.R.C. It is the intention that the tongue of all that compose the assembly should be used in the high praises of God and the testimony to men: "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand" (Ps. 149: 6).

A.P.A. David said, "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, and his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23: 2).

J.P.H. As regards the personal side, would you say something on the words, "it sat upon *each one* of them. And they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit"?

G.R.C. "Each one of them" is the body idea. The doctrine of the body awaited Paul. He says, we are "*each one* members one of the other" (Rom. 12: 5) and he develops that in First Corinthians, "But to *each* the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit" (1 Cor. 12: 7). In Acts 2 the body was formed by the baptism of the Spirit and there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. Does not that show that in the assembly each one of us has his own place sovereignly given by God. He has set for Himself the members in the body as it has pleased Him. "Each one" would refer to each one of the one hundred and twenty. The twelve were there, but the whole vessel is in mind, each one of them, and they "began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them to speak forth". It would include brothers and sisters.

J.P.H. I was thinking of that, and I wondered whether the Spirit sitting would imply that there were receptive conditions for Him with each one of the brethren.

G.R.C. That is very good and would raise an exercise with *each one* of us.

C.C.I. Does Romans 8 raise the question of the Spirit with each one of us? Would the reference to the Spirit of Christ raise the question as to how we stand in relation to the body, and God's Spirit dwelling in us as to how we stand in relation to the house of God?

G.R.C. Very good. "If any one has not the Spirit of Christ he is not of him." It is the body thought, Christ being in the believer, whereas the Spirit of God dwelling in us would fit the individual for the house.

A.L. Would it maintain a balance in our minds between what is collective and what is individual? I may have the Spirit, but it does not make me independent.

G.R.C. It says, "God has set the members, each one of them in the body, according as it has pleased him" (1 Cor. 12: 18), and then it says, "Now ye are Christ's body, and members in particular" (verse 27), and to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit (verse 7), so that we are in no wise to individualise ourselves; and yet it is a question as to whether each of us individually is available to the Spirit, so as to fill out our place in the body.

J.W.G. Does this stress the personality that is proper to the assembly—the one hundred and twenty names? Would it really refer to heavenly personality?

G.R.C. The fact that we are merged in one body does not in any way rob each individual of his distinction; in fact it enhances the distinction of each. Individual distinction is seen at its very best as each merges in the body and fills out his place in it.

R.S.W. Is there a certain glory connected with the sovereignty of the Spirit? Does that run right through? I was thinking of the sovereignty of the Father and the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus, and there is also the sovereignty of the Spirit in imparting what He will to each.

G.R.C. There is. 1 Corinthians 12: 11 asserts the sovereignty of the Spirit, dividing to each in particular as He pleases. And so in our scripture it sat on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

F.O.W. So that, whilst we should be happily conscious of the presence of the Spirit, if we use our tongues we

should in some way understand the up-springing of the Spirit within. I was thinking of the two sides, the happy consciousness of being together in the presence of the Spirit viewed objectively, and then, as we use our tongues, we are conscious of voicing our expressions by the Spirit dwelling within.

G.R.C. Quite so. He is dwelling with us not only individually as in Romans 8 but collectively, "Ye are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3, 16). He is in each one of us and we are together as indwelt by the Spirit.

W.W.S. The end of verse 4 of chapter 2 says, "as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth"—does that bring in regulation, and would the impulse of the Spirit imply the great need for soul sensitiveness on our part to answer to that?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. We are to be dependent on Him so that what we say is of this character—"as the Spirit gave them to speak forth".

A.G.B. Could you say in that regard why the speaking is manward here and we have to wait for the filling out of the service Godward for Paul's ministry?

G.R.C. Do you not think that in Acts the public testimony is primarily in view? Nevertheless it is not only speaking manward. At the end of the chapter it says, "And every day, being constantly in the temple with one accord, and breaking bread in the house, they received their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." The praises of God were going on just as at the end of Luke where they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. As soon as the Lord went on high and the Holy Spirit was poured out, the service of God began; not yet in the full light of Paul's ministry, and yet it was a service worthy of God at that time. There was also the breaking of bread. The service Godward was therefore proceeding, but testimony manward is primarily in mind, and so the first thing said is, "as the Spirit gave them to speak forth".

W.W.S. In that connection is there a sense in which the service of God has a public bearing?

G.R.C. I think the service of God is really the highest form of public testimony; that is the confessing of God's

name in a sacrifice of praise. That is why it is so important that exercised souls should come to the Lord's Supper.

H.B. So a man who came to the morning meeting said it was the most impressive thing he had ever been to.

G.R.C. It should be the most impressive. The high praises of God are proceeding, but you will find the two-edged sword there, too. There will be the testimony manward which has its own effect. Peter wields the sharp two-edged sword.

J.P.H. Does not what you have just said as to the service of God and the preaching bear on what you mentioned earlier as to certain popular preaching which does not connect with the assembly? Is not the service of God behind the public testimony in Acts, and is not the public testimony rendered with a view to the enrichment of the service of God? I am thinking of chapter 13. They were ministering to the Lord and fasting, and the testimony goes out from such conditions and has such conditions in view. I think a good many of the young people amongst us are thinking of what is going on and we need to be balanced about it.

G.R.C. That is very important. There was conflict in 1905 at the time of the Chicago notes as to the relation between the gospel and the house of God, and we need to hold the ground that was secured then. According to Acts 2, God's habitation in the Spirit was established. Then there is the speaking forth by all the saints, a speaking which would be in the spirit of praise and worship. They were speaking of the great things of God. It is with such a backing, the house of God established, and the saints full of the great things of God, that the preaching goes out. Peter stands up with the eleven.

E.T.H. Would you say that in Ezekiel 47 we have the house and then the testimony manward, as suggested in the river, flowing out from that point?

G.R.C. That confirms what we are saying.

Peter in quoting Joel shows the extent of the Spirit's activities as poured out, brothers and sisters being brought into it. Your sons and your daughters and my bondmen and my bondwomen are all said to prophesy and the young men to see visions and the old men to dream dreams.

These things should be current amongst us. Our sons and daughters should be prophesying because they are God's bondmen and bondwomen. No one will be able to prophesy in power unless he is fully committed to God. If we are not available for prophesying, let us look to our bondmanship. Why should not the sisters prophesy? Why should not the young men see visions? No one can go forward without vision; but the Spirit is here in order that the young men might see visions and go forward and the old men dream dreams. All these things should be current in the assembly, so that it is a living vital vessel in the testimony here.

Then in Peter's preaching he stresses, "and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". That is the great point of the moment: the gift of the Holy Spirit. The blessed results were in evidence, and in his preaching Peter opens it up to all. He says, "Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." He as much as says, *You* will come into all that is current. *You* will be in this great vessel, the assembly; *you* will have power to speak forth and to prophesy. Let us see that we are all in it. It is for all of us; but if we are to develop in it we must persevere in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and prayers, and do so *daily*. In saying 'daily' I do not find fault with what is sometimes called the 'assembly calendar', but Acts stresses what is daily. It says they were daily in the temple, and that the Lord added daily. In chapter 6 there is the daily ministration. We should not say there are too many meetings if we had the outlook of the saints in Acts. They were in things daily.

## READING (2)

Acts 9: 1-6, 15-22, 28, 31. Romans 16: 25-27  
Ephesians 3: 1-4. Revelation 3: 1, 2

G.R.C. This morning we were occupied with the great theme of God as declared in the name of the Father, and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, with which name the assembly is in a special way connected as the vessel which understands that name and is responsive to God thus known as no other vessel could be. But we noticed that in the first of Acts, while the Lord presents Himself living, and also speaks of the greatness of the Father who reserves certain things in His own authority, yet He specially stresses the Holy Spirit, leaving the apostles keenly anticipative of the coming of that glorious Person, the One who would come to them as the promise of the Father, the One in whom they would be baptised, and the One who, as coming upon them, would furnish them with power in testimony. The Lord indicates that they are to concentrate on the great matter of the Spirit's coming. He says, "It is not yours to know times or seasons." They were to concentrate on this great outstanding fact that the Holy Spirit was coming and they were left in the keenest anticipation of His coming. Then we dwelt on some of the features that come into view in connection with His actual coming: what was heard, and seen, and felt; the saints being, to use the figure of the human body, not only filled as regards the lower organs with the new wine, but also filled with divine breathing, which afforded power for speaking manward and for feeling and response Godward; so that the service of God and the testimony to men was inaugurated in the greatest possible power, the power of God Himself in the Spirit. Then the door was opened by Peter for all to come into the gain of the Spirit—"ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". The great feature of the dispensation is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is available.

Now this afternoon we have before us the light out of heaven. In chapter 2 it is a sound out of heaven. In chapter 9 it says, "there shone round about him a light out of heaven", and this light is the greatest light that has ever shone. We may say it is the greatest light that ever will shine for men; and men, we need to remember, are the most blest of any creatures, men in Christ, but this is the greatest light that will ever shine. The Spirit of God would help us as to this greatest of all light revealed to Paul. He says, "God . . . was pleased to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:16), and "by revelation the mystery has been

made known to me". Those two revelations constitute the greatest light that has ever come to men, and, if understood, enable us to be in the assembly at the full level of intelligence and response that God desires.

I suggested reading Revelation 3 as an afterthought because the Lord says He is the One who has the seven Spirits of God. That is, the fulness of the Spirit is available with a view to our going on to completion. Paul's ministry involves completion. If we do not go on in our souls and enter into this greatest of light we shall never reach completion according to God, and Sardis, which represents Protestantism, has never moved on to Paul's ministry of the assembly. Protestantism, as such, is ignorant of Paul's gospel and of Paul's intelligence in the mystery. Rome claims to be the assembly, but she is a complete travesty of it. Protestantism has never apprehended the assembly in any sense at all, and one reason why Protestantism has failed is because in her evangelical zeal she has allowed herself to be defiled. Therefore she has become dead; death and defilement go together. Defilement may spring from evangelical zeal, but in defiling ourselves we do it at the expense of our lives, we become dead as to the truth of the assembly and to all that is really living according to God. So the Lord is speaking to those who have not defiled their garments. I mention that as an after-thought as bearing on current exercises. If we are led away, even, as we may think, with the best motives, to defile our garments as Protestantism has done, by using worldly means and methods in testimony, we are disqualified from moving on into this greatest of light. We are disqualified from ever apprehending Paul's ministry. Such a course not only results in disqualification but will lead to moral death. But we will get help, no doubt, in pursuing the positive side. The seven Spirits of God suggest the full availability of the Spirit, so that we might, as giving Him His place, take in this greatest light and thus arrive at the complete thoughts of God.

J.O.S. Would verse 14 of Ephesians 5 bear on this matter, "Wherefore, he says, Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee"? I was thinking particularly as to what you said as to Sardis, whether this is a general word

to the saints with a view to coming into the greatest things.

G.R.C. I am sure that is right, because, as you say, the word “the Christ shall shine upon thee” involves what we have spoken of as the greatest light that has ever been vouchsafed to men. The Christ shining upon us involves the truth of the mystery and Paul’s intelligence in it.

C.R.W. God and the Lamb are the light of the city—would that cover very much what you are saying? I was thinking of Christ, the Lamb, Christ in His manhood; but “God” would cover the three Persons of the Godhead, as being the full light of the city.

G.R.C. Quite so. It says, “the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”, and then it says, “for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb” (Rev. 21: 22–23). What is shining through is the glory of God, but the vessel of that glory is the Lamb; so that the glory is shining in the face of Jesus—that is where we see it. I take it all that will ever be expressed of God is expressed in the Lord Jesus.

R.M.B. Would the mention of light in Matthew 4, the assembly gospel, have this great light in view? “The people sitting in darkness has seen a great light, and to those sitting in the country and shadow of death, to them has light sprung up” (verse 16). I wondered if that had this great light in view.

G.R.C. Well, I think it helps, because that speaks of the light which is shining down, the great light. “The people sitting in darkness has seen a great light.” Then it speaks of the light that has sprung up. There was the light of God shining upon them in Christ, like the sun in the heavens. On the other hand, the light had sprung up, which refers, I suppose, to the light of life seen in Him as a Man living in all the favour of God. Is that not seen in the assembly? The light springing up today is in the assembly.

G.H.B. In the passage in Ephesians 5 there is a reference to Isaiah 60: 1, “Arise, shine! for thy light is come.” Is that our light you have in mind?

G.R.C. Yes. That is exactly what I have in mind—it is a light out of heaven; and Paul says later that he saw this light at midday, and it was above the brightness of the sun.

A.B. Is it important that the light is from heaven? Does it have in mind that believers are linked with this blessed Man in heaven? They are linked with Him in the Spirit.

G.R.C. I am sure that is so. He is the Second Man, out of heaven, and according to chapter 1 He was taken up into heaven. In chapter 2 there is a sound out of heaven, and now in chapter 9 a light out of heaven; so that heaven dominates the whole position. A Man has gone into heaven, and the result is a sound out of heaven as the Spirit comes, and now a light out of heaven.

G.F.S. Does the sense of that light increase with him, because in chapter 22 he says, "a great light"?

G.R.C. And in chapter 26, "a light above the brightness of the sun".

R.W. Is there a psalm which says, "in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9)?

G.R.C. How do you understand that?

R.W. I wondered if it worked out in the way Saul of Tarsus responded to the Lord. He is brought into the full light and outshining of all that God is.

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. Paul was brought into the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, which set him free; and also into the light of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, because this light includes what he calls "my gospel", and the first thing he does, according to verse 20, is "straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God". God had revealed His Son in him. Then finally, in the Lord's own words, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute *me*?"—the mystery was revealed to him. I believe all that is included in the light out of heaven, the light of the glory of God, the light of sonship, and the light of the mystery—"Why dost thou persecute *me*?"

A.H. It says, "as I could not see, through the glory of that light", in chapter 22: 11. Paul is calling attention not only to the light but to the glory of it. Would that have in mind this vast range?

G.R.C. It shows how it moved his whole being, and thus he can speak of *the glory* of that light.

S.H. Does he bring this light to bear upon the Galatians? When they had departed from the truth of the gospel he

refers to the revelation of the Son of God in him. He is moving in the greatness of this light.

G.R.C. Very good. We may get help in speaking of Paul's ministry in its two parts according to the end of Romans, "my glad tidings, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery". Paul's ministry was composed of two parts, as it were: he was minister of the gospel and he was minister of the assembly. It is one ministry in two parts. I do not see in scripture that Paul, in the ordinary course of things, separated the two. In Galatians he refers to the gospel only, because the truth of his gospel was at stake; but generally, as in Romans 16, Colossians 1 and Ephesians 3, he links the two together. He does not separate the two parts of his ministry, because both are essential. Whether we have apprehended how the two parts of his ministry bear on each other I do not know.

F.W.T. Is it significant that the two expressions you quote, Paul speaking of himself as minister of the gospel and minister of the assembly, are put together with scarcely a verse between? The Spirit of God puts them together in that way in Colossians.

G.R.C. That is very interesting; and similarly in Ephesians he says, "to me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and to enlighten all with the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God" (3: 8-9). So that both in Colossians and Ephesians and in the end of Romans the two are brought together. The two together form the great light, the light out of heaven, the light above the brightness of the sun, and we should learn to hold these two lines together—they are complementary—the truth of sonship, which is Paul's gospel, and the truth of the assembly.

J.O.S. If Paul had taken off what we might speak of as the top-shoot of his ministry, that is, his ministry as to the mystery, he would never have gone to Rome. I was thinking of the verse in Acts 22 that he quotes, "Go, for I will send thee to the nations afar off. And they heard him until this word, and lifted up their voice, saying, Away with such a one as that from the earth, for it was

not fit he should live" (verses 21-22). I was thinking how the top-shoot, you might say, the mystery, was really a great test, and whether that is a great test today?

G.R.C. I am sure that is true. I would not say sonship is the test exactly, although it is always a test in another way—it was a test in Galatia. So that we have to be on our guard to maintain the truth of sonship. But generally the truth of the mystery is what tests us, because the truth of the mystery involves intelligence in the highest degree, and the deepest exercises of soul. But it is normal for sons to be intelligent. God would give His sons intelligence to enter into the most secret thoughts of His heart—"the mystery hidden throughout the ages in God". Paul was, therefore, both minister of the gospel and minister of the assembly. The separation of these two ministries results in defectiveness as to the whole scope of the truth.

A.L.B. Is it not particularly important at the present time when things outwardly are in great confusion that these two parts of Paul's ministry should be held as one?

G.R.C. I think it is, and the Spirit of God may help us on this particular occasion to see how the two parts of his ministry are complementary and necessary to each other. It is not a question of setting one against the other, or saying that one is greater than the other. Such comparisons are pointless and damaging. The point is that both lines are absolutely essential, and only those who are in the liberty of sonship can ever find their place properly in the assembly. On the one hand the intelligence and liberty of sonship are necessary if we are to find our place in the body and function of the assembly; and on the other hand, the more we enter into the truth of the assembly the more we provide a setting where the sons are seen in service at their very best. The two things are necessary to each other.

A.B. Does Paul present the mystery enticingly in Romans 16: 25? He presents it as something to go in for.

G.R.C. I think so; and is not the word "according to" important? "Now to him that is able to establish you, according to my glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery."

That is, one is according to the other. It is not a question of setting one against the other, or comparing; one is *according to* the other, and essential to the other.

A.McG. Did not Mr. Stoney say that the gospel of the Son of God was the gospel of the glory? Would that not govern the whole position? Is not Paul the minister? He says, "according to my glad tidings".

G.R.C. Quite so. On that line what could be greater than the truth of sonship and our association with Christ in all the favour of the Father's affections?

J.C.T. Is it not a great exercise as to the kind of ministry that souls come under? I was thinking how Paul is supremely affected by the light which reached him initially. It is important that the full gospel should be presented, the gift of the Spirit and some light as to the assembly coming into the presentation of the glad tidings.

G.R.C. It is of the utmost importance.

W.W.S. Is it right to think that in Romans it is God who is in view, and "my glad tidings" and the preaching of Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the mystery, is all in view of God being served?

G.R.C. Yes, and Paul is an example, is he not, in the very fact that what he is saying there forms part of the doxology? He is a worshipper; he is worshipping God in relation to eternal purpose. In chapter 11 he worships God in connection with His ways, but he closes Romans with a note of worship to God relative to eternal purpose, referring to the eternal God, "according to the commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations".

W.W.S. It would help us in that way, therefore, to understand that the preaching of Jesus Christ has in view the securing of persons for the pleasure and service of God.

C.R.W. So the apostle lays a glorious basis here, preaching "Jesus, that he is the Son of God", and Christ becomes Son that He might bring in a company of sons, a suitable people to worship God.

A.H. Who would you have in mind as to verse 25 of Romans 16, "to him that is able to establish you . . ."?

G.R.C. The eternal God, the only-wise God. Who would you have in mind?

A.H. I thought it embodied the Persons of the Godhead that you referred to in Matthew.

G.R.C. It must do, because the eternal God is now made known in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Rem. Would you say why the prophetic scriptures are brought in here?

G.R.C. You will note that it does not say 'Scriptures of the prophets' because the mystery was hidden and formed no part of their testimony in Old Testament times, but it says 'prophetic Scriptures'. Paul says in connection with his ministry of the mystery in Colossians that it was given to him according to the dispensation of God towards them to complete (or fill full) the word of God. I think in the light of Paul's ministry many scriptures, which in themselves are historic, become prophetic of the mystery. We can now include New Testament scriptures; but they were not written at the time Paul was writing, so he would have in his mind Old Testament scriptures. Not that those who uttered them understood the truth of the mystery—they did not. The mystery was hidden throughout the ages in God, but the One who indited the scriptures knew the mystery of God and He used men of old to write down prophetic scriptures. Once we have Paul's ministry as a key whereby to unlock their meaning, they become prophetic as giving light about the mystery. We need to see that Paul's ministry fills out or completes the word of God. Completing does not mean that he added the last section to scripture, because we know he did not; John wrote after Paul. The idea is that Paul's ministry fills out the whole plan of scripture and is thus like the key of knowledge to the whole of scripture. So that, having Paul's ministry, Genesis 2 becomes prophetic. Genesis 2 would not be prophetic as to the mystery without Paul's ministry, but having Paul's ministry we can see that Genesis 2 is a prophetic scripture. God brings the woman to the man and the man names the woman. Genesis 24 also becomes a prophetic scripture as to the mystery. So also do the scriptures relating to the tabernacle system and the house which Solomon built for Jehovah. Having Paul's ministry, which completes the word of God, scriptures in the Old Testament open up to us and provide marvellous wealth.

The revelation of the mystery was to Paul, but the prophetic scriptures confirm and give fulness to it; so it says, "by prophetic scriptures, according to the commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations".

A.L.B. Does what James says in Acts 15 help: "And with this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written" (verse 15), and then, "the Lord, who does these things known from eternity" (verse 18)?

G.R.C. Quite so. If the mystery was hidden throughout the ages in God, the Spirit of God inditing the scriptures would have this matter ever before Him, and so the Old Testament is replete with prophetic scriptures relating to the mystery; but until the mystery was revealed to Paul no one understood these scriptures.

Eu.R. You have in mind that this word to Paul, "why dost thou persecute me?" is the filling out of Genesis 2—the man and the woman?

G.R.C. In Acts 9 the Lord Jesus names the woman. We have to keep in mind that scripture does not repeat itself; so that Genesis 2, the prophetic scripture, stands in all its glory by itself. There Jehovah Elohim brings the woman to the man and the man names the woman in that setting, God having brought her to him. In the New Testament we get something additional, and that is that the Lord from His exalted position owns the suffering assembly on earth as His body. Just as Adam said, "this time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh", so here the Lord owns the assembly as His body. He names the assembly to the elect vessel that He had sovereignly taken up to be the minister of the assembly. You can understand the Lord naming the assembly to Saul of Tarsus—"Why dost thou persecute me?" I do not think anyone else could name the assembly except the Lord Jesus.

Eu.R. Then in Genesis 24 we have three Persons of the Godhead active through the dispensation to bring about response to the Son of God in view of the service of God.

A.G.B. How would the expression "made known for obedience of faith to all nations" work out? I notice in Acts 26 Paul says there in recounting this matter before Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

G.R.C. Is it not meant that not only is the gospel “made known for obedience of faith to all the nations”, but the mystery, too? The mystery is not optional. That is how it is regarded, if it is regarded at all, in Protestantism; it is really not understood at all. Paul’s ministry generally is regarded as optional. But the gospel is preached for the obedience of faith to all the nations, and alongside of it the revelation of the mystery is made known for the obedience of faith to all nations by commandment of the eternal God.

Ques. Does the way that this great light affected Paul and took possession of him become a pattern?

G.R.C. If we truly apprehend the light above the brightness of the sun, it will take possession of us. The truth of Paul’s gospel and the truth of the mystery as made known by him will completely control our beings and our lives, and that is what God is after.

J.J.McC. Is it helpful to see that in Ephesians 5, where the truth of the mystery is developed, Paul commences by speaking of the saints as those who were “once darkness, but now light in the Lord”, and then refers to them as “children of light”, as though it is only such persons that can come into the gain of what he can speak of in relation to Christ and the assembly?

G.R.C. That is very important. I am glad you referred to Ephesians 5. We are now light in the Lord; Saul of Tarsus became light in the Lord, and we are all to become light in the Lord. In that chapter he says, “This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly”, and preceding that we are called members of His body. That is the light which came to Saul here. He had seen the members, he had dragged them off to prison (Acts 8: 3); he had seen Jesus expressed in those members. So that when Jesus owns the vessel and names her, saying, “Why persecutest thou *me*?” Saul of Tarsus understood. He had no difficulty in taking in the idea immediately; and it grew with him. “We are members of his body; we are of his flesh, and of his bones. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly.” That is the great mystery of the present moment, that

Christ, the glorified Man, has left interests which are very precious to Him because of something that is *most* precious. It is what He has done now. He has left precious interests for what is most precious, to be united to His wife. How much do we know of the truth that Christ is united to His wife?

E.C.L. Are we not tested by the fact that that position is outwardly one of suffering and reproach? Do you think in Christendom generally it is not accepted? We turn aside from it, but Paul's first impression was that it was in suffering and in reproach.

G.R.C. So Acts 9 has its own setting, and Genesis 2 stands in its own setting. There is no suffering or reproach in Genesis 2. Saul of Tarsus saw the vessel here in suffering and in the greatest reproach. The vessel linked with Jesus the Nazarean as to the public position was really the wife of the glorified Man.

D.S.H. Does the reference to Ananias and his coming into the matter show how the Lord is able to co-ordinate things? He is working with Paul and He is co-ordinating things in regard to His people who were already suffering, so that they should be intelligent, not only as to the one who was to be an elect vessel but as to the place he was to have amongst the people of God.

G.R.C. So that the title "Lord" is prominent in this chapter, which bears on what was referred to earlier, "for ye were once darkness, but now light in (the) Lord". The title "Lord" in Ephesians goes a long way. It may, in certain passages, merge into Deity, corresponding with 'Adonai' in the Old Testament. We know that Jesus is *made* Lord, but the title Lord may sometimes imply more than this. It says, "be strong in the Lord, and in the might of his strength" (Eph. 6: 10)—"for ye were once darkness but now light in the Lord" (Eph. 5: 8), and this chapter stresses light right through. It is the Lord acting, because unless we are subject to the Lord as Saul was here, we shall never come into the light of the Christ. Saul says, "Who art thou, Lord?" and he never withdraws his complete surrender to the Lord. As one who was light in the Lord he says, "Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon

thee" (Eph. 5: 14). It is as the Christ that the church is linked with Him. We need to be subject to the Lord if we are to apprehend the Christ and all that centres in the Christ.

A.M. Would lordship link on with the obedience of faith?

G.R.C. It would. We are called on to obey the Lord and as we said earlier Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. May the Lord grant that none of us here may be disobedient to the heavenly vision. The Spirit would give us heavenly vision at a time like this.

F.W.B. In Acts 9: 17 Ananias says, "the Lord has sent me that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit". Is it necessary to be filled with the Holy Spirit if we are to enter into the full light of the truth?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. *We* should know what it is to be filled with the Spirit. Of Saul of Tarsus the Lord says, he "is an elect vessel to me", and we know he has a peculiar place; but then he applies the idea of a vessel to all the saints in Romans 9: 23, saying, "that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy". So that all the saints are vessels from that standpoint, and the idea of a vessel is that it is to be *filled*. God has no thought of a vessel that is not filled. If we apprehend that we are vessels individually it makes room for the great vessel, the assembly, the great vessel that is to be filled to all the fulness of God (Eph. 3: 19).

J.O.S. Is it not to be noticed that in Ephesians 5: 17 we have the understanding of what is the will of the Lord, and then in the next verse, "but be filled with the Spirit"? I wondered if we shall ever be filled with the Spirit if we are not subject to the Lord.

G.R.C. I am sure we shall never be filled with the Spirit unless we are subject to the Lord.

W.J.T. Have we not thought that being filled with the Spirit was left to certain kinds of persons, but it should be normal to us all?

W.W.S. Involving the displacing of every feature that is not pleasing to the Spirit, every feature that is not seen in Christ?

G.R.C. Is not that very important because Protestantism has taken on all sorts of extraneous things to help

them with evangelisation, and so on? Actually it disqualifies persons completely from these higher levels of the truth, which we cannot enter into apart from the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is prepared to help any one as far as he finds any room at all, but we need to be *filled* with the Spirit for the higher levels; and it is open to all of us to be filled with the Spirit. The word is, "*be filled*", and Paul would not say that if it were not a possibility.

F.W.T. In Acts 6 they had no difficulty in finding seven men filled with the Spirit.

G.R.C. Can we find them in our localities?

G.H.B. Paul says, "If any one think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor. 14: 37). Is it because of the relationship in which the assembly stands that we need to be governed in the wilderness position by the Lord's commandments?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right, otherwise we shall not be free to enter into the higher levels, but the Lord's commandment governs us fully in the wilderness position.

E.J.B. Would the passage in Romans 16 help, not only in the matter of evangelisation apart from the assembly, but also in the matter of mixed marriages, that the commandment involves subjection both in relation to the glad tidings and in relation to the assembly?

G.R.C. Say a little more.

E.J.B. I was thinking of "the commandment of the eternal God"—in seeking a partner in marriage. It is essential according to the commandment to have one who is not only in the light of the glad tidings but also in the light of the assembly.

G.R.C. That is very good. How could we be moving in the light of the assembly otherwise? The truth of the mystery involves, as to Christ and the assembly, that the two shall be one flesh. How can there be complete oneness between two persons when one is holding the truth of the mystery and the other is not?

E.J.B. I was thinking of that and the commandment of the eternal God making it essential.

G.R.C. There is nothing more damaging, and nothing hinders the saints more from entering into the higher

levels of the truth, than mixed marriages and other evil associations.

C.C.I. Is all this to have a bearing on the local assembly, the light of it being received at Damascus, and the truth of it being worked out in Paul's ministry by the local assembly at Ephesus? Is there a danger of divorcing the great truth of the mystery from what is practical in the local assembly?

G.R.C. We must not do that. When you come to the local assembly as in the two epistles to Corinthians, Paul finishes them by saying, "I have espoused you"—that refers to the local company at Corinth—"I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2). So that the light Paul had in his soul as to the assembly in its completeness as espoused to Christ governed him in his activities and ministry. In every local company he had nothing less in his mind than that each local company should be espoused to one Man.

Eu.R. So just now we are facing serious exercises in India, and we are sharing deep sorrows in Australia. It is all because we belong to the "me".

J.W.C. The light that shone for Saul is shining now for us to embrace and the Spirit would help us on that line.

G.R.C. The Lord saying "he that has the seven Spirits of God" shows that all is available now. The seven Spirits of God stand related to the seven lamps. The Spirit in His faithfulness is available to the assembly so that the full light may shine.

Eu.R. This co-relation would make it a very serious thing to embark on any independence in relation to the glad tidings. The gospel is the gospel of the glory, and it needs the glory of the assembly behind it.

J.L.W. Is it helpful to notice that the gift of the evangelist is in a special setting in Ephesians 4, coming down from the ascended head, a Man in the glory, and in the place of Deity, all with a view to certain things being worked out in the saints?

G.R.C. Very good. The gift of the evangelist is given, just as are the other gifts, from the Man who has ascended above all the heavens. He could not have ascended *above* all heavens if He had not been God, yet He is truly Man. The gifts, including the evangelists, are with a "view to

the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ”.

H.W.T.S. Paul speaks at the end of Ephesians of “opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the glad tidings”. Did not Mr. Stoney say that the gospel might be known while the mystery of the glad tidings is wholly unknown?

G.R.C. So that he desires prayers specially for the opening of his mouth to make known *the mystery* of the glad tidings.

J.P.H. Is it contained in the word to Timothy, “who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2: 4)?

G.R.C. Yes, because the word ‘knowledge’ there is really “full knowledge”.

J.P.H. I was thinking of that—the full knowledge of the truth—and I was wondering if it would help in that connection to see Andrew in John 1. He wanted to see where the Lord abode and he abode with Him that day; and then he goes out and finds his own brother Peter and brings him to Christ. I wondered whether privilege and our part in the service of God, and in association with Christ where He is, gives background to our seeking of souls?

F.D.W. Is an evangelist one who has been captivated by the light out of heaven and becomes a bondman?

G.R.C. We all need to be captivated by this light.

A.H. Is it not a sorrowful matter that all the reformers fell short of the mystery and the light of the church?

G.R.C. It is, and it makes it very imperative that we should hold fast today and be intelligent as to the mystery of the Christ. It is not only a question of the one body, that would preserve us from independency, but also that we are Christ’s body; and then that He has left other interests to be united to His wife. This is a *great* matter because when you think of a wife how much is involved in that, a vessel that is competent to be with Him in every sphere of interest in which He moves. Whether we think of administration, what is downward, or whether we think of what is upward in the service of God, the Lord has secured a vessel of which it is said, “the two shall be one flesh”, a vessel that moves in the current of His own thoughts and affections in every way.

H.J.M. Is Paul's work at Antioch helpful in that connection? It says that he was with them for a whole year and "they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch". I was thinking of the time given to work these things out both in privilege and in administration.

G.R.C. Very good.

W.W.S. Would the mystery as alluded to here at the end of Romans greatly contribute, and if rightly apprehended, lead to deeper and richer response to God as expressed in this choice doxology? As you know, there are four of them in Romans, but is not this the greatest?

G.R.C. I think so, because of the references to the eternal God and the only-wise God. It is an ascription in worship of glory to God in relation to His purpose.

W.W.S. If the truth of the mystery were better understood we should find ourselves using expressions that have "doxology" character.

G.R.C. I believe so. The purpose of God includes what Paul speaks of as "my gospel"; that is, it includes sonship. We were marked out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself. But then the purpose of God also includes "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times" (Eph. 1: 9). Purpose embraces both ideas: the truth of sonship and the truth of the mystery. They are both included in the purpose of the eternal God, the only-wise God, and both are needed; and the relation between each needs to be understood if worship in the way you are speaking of it is to ascend to God from the assembly in Christ Jesus. We need to understand both sonship and the assembly, including the relationship between Christ and the assembly. I do not know how far we have apprehended that.

C.W.O'L.M. I was just wondering whether you would explain the difference between "my glad tidings" and "the preaching of Jesus Christ". Does that not form a certain basis for the apprehension of the mystery?

G.R.C. I think so. "My gospel" particularly refers to the truth of sonship, and then "the preaching of Jesus

Christ" is foundational because the whole structure is patterned after Jesus Christ, from the foundation to the corner stone; and He Himself is the Corner Stone. No other man has any place or footing there at all. So that the preaching of Jesus Christ lays the basis for the truth of the mystery.

A.B. Would the preaching of the Son of God involve Christ as known outside of this world and having another world of His own, and would not that result in deliverance practically from this world's system?

G.R.C. As you say, sonship takes us outside the world and involves great liberty with God, the Spirit of His Son being in our hearts. From the standpoint of *experience* we arrive at the liberty of sonship in Romans 8: 14-15, and in this liberty we find our place in the body according to Romans 12: 4-5. F.E.R. said that no one finds his place in the body apart from the liberty of sonship. Romans 8 thus comes before Romans 12—"as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (verses 14-15). Persons such as that can happily accept divine sovereignty as to their place in the body. Thus Paul's gospel is needed before we can begin to touch the assembly. Unless we are in the liberty of sonship we shall quarrel with God's sovereignty. Indeed, it is only sons who apprehend God's great plan as to the body, the assembly; and it is only sons who are prepared happily to accept the place His sovereign will has given them in that great vessel. As we apprehend what the assembly is and accept our functional part in it we become available in it as sons to serve God, because the assembly is the place where sons serve. The assembly has to be distinguished from the family. The Father's house is the place of liberty where the sons are at home; the assembly is the vessel of service where each one has a place divinely given and where all function under the impulse of the headship of Christ. So it is in the assembly setting where the sons are seen serving; in the Father's house they are at home and at rest. Unless we understand union with Christ we shall never understand the assembly as a vessel of service Godward.

S.H. Would you say, in what you are referring to at the moment, that there is some instruction for us in Acts 9 as to the Lord Jesus saying in verse 5, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest", and then Ananias saying to him later, "the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest", and then his reference to his being Son of God, "Jesus, that he is the Son of God"? Do you think that there is something in what you are saying as to the charm of it in these two references: the light as to the assembly and then the distinctive light as to the Person, the personal name being used?

G.R.C. What charm, indeed, in the personal Name! According to verse 20, he preached Jesus that He is Son of God, but in verse 22 he "increased the more in power"—note that! He is going on to the mystery in principle (not that it was yet developed) and he increased the more in power, for that is what is necessary with regard to the truth of the mystery. "But Saul increased the more in power . . . proving that this is the Christ." The mystery centres round the Christ. Paul in his ministry begins with the Son of God and goes on to the Christ—"the Christ" occurs nearly twenty times in Ephesians—whereas John begins with Christ and goes on to the Son of God. We need both ministries. The mystery centres round the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and the church is united to Him.

S.H. The Lord, even *Jesus*, appeared to him on the Damascus road. The charm and greatness of the Person and the liberty of sonship would dawn upon the soul of the apostle, do you think?

G.R.C. The liberty of sonship would be known as the glory of the Son of God dawned on him. But then he goes on to prove that Jesus is the Christ. So that the wonderful truth is that *the Son of God* is the Christ.

Then just a word as to verse 28, "and he was with them coming in and going out". He is a real assembly man. He does not come in with any self-importance, saying that the Lord had appeared to him and that he was a chosen vessel; nothing like that about Paul, once Saul. He has the light of the assembly, which precludes any self-importance at all. It is wonderful that in the case of the Lord Jesus Himself, who is the Person of all-importance, it is said of Him

“the Lord Jesus came in and went out among them”. He, who was God over all, Blessed for ever, of Him it says that He came in and went out *among* them. It does not say He came in as over them, though God over all. Saul immediately takes character from the Lord—“he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem”—a real assembly man.

E.T.H. “Saul, brother”, was not that an excellent start?

G.R.C. We need a *family* start. The family lays the basis for the assembly.

D.S.H. Did Paul come into the benefit of Ananias there? Was Ananias appreciating the hard breathing, and did Paul come into the benefit of that?

G.R.C. What feelings marked Ananias! The feelings of God and of Christ were expressed in him in the power of the Spirit.

### READING (3)

Acts 10: 9–20, 34–48. Ephesians 2: 14–22; 3: 1–6

G.R.C. We are engaged in these readings with the assembly as presented in Acts, and what we have read now refers to a revelation to Peter. The Lord Jesus had already called Paul, the great minister of the assembly, and now the Spirit of God takes Peter in hand in order to make way for Paul. What is indicated to Peter, the truth involved in it, is essential if we are to be free to move in the gain of the light out of heaven which came to Paul. So the Spirit of God takes Peter in hand, and according to the next chapter (11: 5) he sees “a certain vessel descending like a great sheet, let down by the four corners out of heaven”. So we have again the expression “out of heaven”—there was the sound out of heaven, the light out of heaven and now Peter has a vision of a certain vessel as a great sheet let down by the four corners out of heaven. He sees the contents of the sheet and he receives certain instructions and adjustment—three times over—showing the importance of this matter; and then the vessel was

straightway taken up into heaven. So it is of immense importance if we are to be free to move in liberty according to the truth of Paul's ministry, that we should all understand and accept the teaching in Peter's vision, that we should accept the same adjustment which Peter accepted because, while he, as a Jew, needed it in a special way, we all need it in measure. In one sense the 'Jew' is in all of us; we all naturally tend to have a sense of superiority, personally and nationally and in other ways; it is the tendency of sin in the flesh that we should attach some sense of superiority to ourselves—like the Pharisees who regarded themselves as righteous and despised the rest of men. So we need the view of the assembly which Peter is given and to accept the adjustment which he accepts, so that there should be morally no hindrance to our entering upon the higher levels of the mystery. Peter's vision teaches what one has referred to (I hope the expression is acceptable to the brethren) as the lower levels of the mystery. The lower levels of the mystery were not peculiar to Paul. In Ephesians 3: 4 he speaks of "*my* intelligence in the mystery of the Christ"—that was peculiar to himself; then he goes on to speak of a level of things which was "revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit", and I believe that is seen in chapters 10 and 11 of Acts. The Spirit was active here and He reveals things to Peter, and through Peter to the rest of the apostles, in the power of the Spirit, "that they who are of the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings". That revelation was not peculiar to Paul; it was revealed to Peter and to the holy apostles and prophets. It does not rise to the level of Paul's intelligence in the mystery, it does not take us into the heavenly relationships which pertain to the assembly; it is a basic matter that those of the nations should be "a joint body"—it does not say Christ's body (Paul would tell us that) but that the nations should be a joint body and joint heirs, and so on. I thought we might get help on this side of the truth which, as I say, is absolutely essential if we are to be free to move on to the higher levels which Paul was used to open up.

G.F.S. Would the fact that Peter is told to "slay and eat" indicate that the way has been opened up by the

death of Christ, and help us to view one another in the light of it?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. So the death of Christ is greatly stressed in Ephesians 2. I suggested reading that chapter because although the revelation was given to Peter, it is Paul who gives us the doctrine. You have to go to Paul for the doctrine in most things. For instance, Paul said that he was not sent to baptise but to preach the gospel, yet we have to go to Paul for the doctrine of baptism. So as to this: it was a revelation to Peter, but we have to go to Paul for the doctrine.

D.S.H. Does it appear in the character of Paul's service? The administration of the mystery was committed to him as distinct from Peter, whereas something of a more general character was known to the others.

G.R.C. Yes. Although Peter had this vision in order to clear the ground for Paul's ministry, yet Peter's commission (he was the apostle of the circumcision) was not the administration of the mystery, although he had the keys of the kingdom and was used to bring the Gentiles in, in the wisdom of God's ways. It was given to Paul to work out the truth of the assembly in its full conception; that is, as embracing Jew and Gentile and every type of man.

W.W.S. Is the light out of heaven which shone around Paul in chapter 9 now taking concrete and substantial shape in this certain vessel descending out of heaven—an allusion to the assembly in the light of the lower levels of which you spoke? It was necessary in view of touching the assembly in the light of what is heavenly, do you think?

G.R.C. That is very helpful, that the assembly here is called a "vessel", so that, as you say, it is something substantial. It is one thing to have the light which came to Paul in chapter 9, which he said later was a light out of heaven above the brightness of the sun at midday, the brightest light that ever shone; but it is interesting to see that Peter sees what is substantial; not only light, but a certain *vessel*. It is a great thing to hold in our minds that the assembly is a vessel; each one of us is a vessel—Paul was an elect vessel—we are vessels of mercy before prepared for glory. But the *great* vessel is the assembly

and that is a very substantial idea. Peter sees this vessel, not in its heavenly relationships, not in a defined way, it is like a sheet. It is a question of what it contained, nevertheless it is a vessel, and one which is going to be filled to all the fulness of God. But it has not arrived at that here; it is an initial view of the vessel relative to the personnel which it contained. Yet the vessel itself, with all its contents too, comes out of heaven, and it goes back to heaven. That is the great thing to understand.

B.G.H. Is it important to see that the vessel is heavenly in origin and character, and is received back into heaven? That is the force of the word.

G.R.C. That is most important. We are to apprehend that there is a vessel on earth whose origin is heaven and whose destiny is heaven. It is only on earth for a time in testimony, and as soon as the time of testimony is finished it will be received back into heaven; meanwhile, all its links are there. It is let down out of heaven by its four corners, so that all its links are heavenward. But it is here for the time being in testimony, and while it is here we have to face the conditions which Peter saw inside the sheet. When it is taken up to heaven finally no such conditions will obtain but while it is here in testimony we have to face the fact that while the vessel itself is heavenly in origin, there are in it those who are very much earthly in origin and they have sinful histories. Nevertheless, viewed according to God, even the creatures in the vessel are out of heaven.

W.W.S. So it is here and now that moral exercises are worked out in the assembly.

G.R.C. Yes, and unless we face these moral issues we will never be free for what Paul would lead us into.

R.W. Would you enlarge further on what you call the 'lower' levels, and understanding the idea of the sheet as coming out of heaven? Are the creatures in the sheet the personnel?

G.R.C. Paul says in Ephesians 3: 3, "by revelation the mystery has been made known to me". No doubt Paul had the whole of it; he did not need Peter's vision, he had the whole matter, whether we speak of it as higher levels or lower levels. The mystery was made known to Paul. Then he says, "according as I have written before briefly,

by which, in reading it, ye can understand *my* intelligence in the mystery of the Christ". As I understand it, Paul's intelligence in the mystery of the Christ includes the whole truth of the assembly, its full place and relationships relative to Christ and to God. But then he goes on to say, "which in other generations had not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, that they who are of the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings". As I understand it, verses 5 and 6 relate to that part of the truth of the mystery which is not peculiar to Paul but which is revealed to Peter in Acts 10, and in the power of the Spirit is passed on by him in chapter 11 to "the holy apostles and prophets".

G.H.B. Does this involve the truth of the new head? Peter says, "he is Lord of all", and Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15 about the "last Adam", and of the one made of dust, and then of the heavenly One and the heavenly ones.

G.R.C. That is right, because the second Man is out of heaven—it is the same expression, "out of heaven". He cannot be limited to Israel nor to any particular nation; what comes out of heaven is unique. There is the heavenly One and the heavenly ones, a new order. Is that what you had in mind?

G.H.B. That is it, and we come to it by recognition of the order to which we once belonged by nature, of dust, and then the order into which we come on account of Christ's headship.

G.R.C. Quite so. Ephesians 2 says, "he is our peace". That links with Peter's preaching, "the word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)"—that is, Jew and Gentile, there is no distinction. He is Lord of all, but preaching peace. It is a question of peace now, not only with God but peace between man and man. So it says in Ephesians 2, where the gospel of peace is referred to, "he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, having annulled the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that he might form the two in himself into one new man, making peace". Does that not bear on what we are saying that He creates

the two in Himself into one new man? He is the Man out of heaven, and He creates the two in Himself into one new man. It is a heavenly matter, "one new man".

E.C.L. It is interesting that in chapter 11 Peter has to face this matter with the brethren at Jerusalem; and then in chapter 15 Paul has to face it—the contention which arises over this very thing. I was thinking of what you were saying as to the enmity which exists, that the man after the flesh, personified in the Jew, does not seem to be able to appreciate God coming in sovereignly and bringing in something better than he has had before.

G.R.C. Through sin the old man is marked by every feature of enmity. The enmity between Jew and Gentile is the most pronounced; I suppose it has been the cause of more conflicts on earth than any other thing; and is still a great bone of contention. But then, while that is the greatest enmity between man and man, God in dealing with that has dealt with every other enmity also because He has dealt with the man himself. Our old man has been crucified with Christ; in the cross that man has been brought to an end in judgment, the man to whom all these enmities attach; and He has formed the two (Jew and Gentile) in Himself into one new man, making peace, and that is the only way of making peace—"one new man"! Then following that He has reconciled both to God in *one* body by the cross, and following that we both have access through Him to the Father in *one* Spirit. The whole matter is one of peace. The gospel of peace brings in unity, real unity according to God, based on the complete judgment of man in the flesh in the cross of Christ, and our being formed in Christ Jesus into one new man.

A.H. Does Peter's appropriation involve that on our part?

G.R.C. I think it does. It would be well for us to consider Peter now.

A.G.B. Is it of import to see that Peter is enjoined to eat? Is it a matter of our learning this great truth inwardly? It is not only light but what is formed by it. One was impressed by the fact that Peter hungered, and I wondered if it would be carrying it too far to link it on with the normal work of God in every one of our souls. God provides food that will satisfy the hunger in our souls.

G.R.C. That is an excellent suggestion, because unless we arrive at God's full thoughts as to the assembly, we shall, I am sure, be hungry. The work of God in us is of such a character that the satisfaction of our souls requires, I believe, our arriving at the full thoughts of God.

A.B. In regard to the question of hunger, would the appreciation of the mercy and grace of God who has closed our former history in the death of Christ greatly help us in regard to unity?

G.R.C. I am sure it would, and it would help us as to feeding on one another. What you are saying as to the way God has cleansed us in mercy provides such abundance of food once we learn to appropriate the brethren in the way Peter did, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat"—what abundance of food was available.

H.P. God says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (Gen. 3 : 15).

G.R.C. The enmity is with the serpent and its seed, and that works out specially in the religious man. He is an inveterate enemy; the religious man is always a tool of Satan, one of the most serviceable tools of Satan. The enmity was present in Peter at the beginning of this chapter. He says, "In no wise, Lord." He shrank from anything of this kind. But then Peter gets adjusted. There is no enmity with Peter after this vision; his outlook is completely changed, and he is entirely changed. He understands that by the cross the Lord Jesus has slain the enmity. Men slay one another because of the incompatibility of the features of the old man, but the Lord Jesus, by the cross, has slain the enmity, so that the saints can be together in peace, and if we do not learn to be together in peace, and not only in peace but as feeding on one another, how can we move on to the great thoughts of God ministered by Paul?

W.W.S. Peter is exhorted to slay. Does that mean that we have to bring the death of Christ to bear on one another in view of appropriating one another?

G.R.C. Yes, otherwise shall we not be feeding on one another's natural and fleshly characteristics, which only foster the enmity, and we well know how it works out. How difficult it is to free our minds from such things. The solution is, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat." He is going

to view the brethren now in the light of the death of Christ, where everything that has marked them has been dealt with.

B.G.H. We feed on what God has cleansed.

G.R.C. That is it, "What God has cleansed, do not thou make common."

F.W.T. In that sense the brethren are available to us for the enjoyment of the thoughts of God.

G.R.C. It is a great thing to learn to feed on one another according to God, for it gives strength—"we, being many, are one bread, one body"—and that implies that we feed on one another. In the tabernacle the priests could eat the shewbread. Israel will be reconciled to God in twelve tribes, and the shewbread was typical of Israel according to divine purpose. Those who form the assembly are reconciled to God in one body. We are one loaf, not twelve loaves—"we being many, are one loaf, one body", and we are food for one another in that way.

W.J.T. When we come to the supper we look upon the elements, and we look, too, upon the brethren—we do not close our eyes.

G.R.C. If we are in the gain of this chapter that is just what we can do. We shall be able to look at the brethren in relation to their heavenly origin and destiny. God has cleansed them so that to us now they are no longer quadrupeds and creeping things of the earth and fowls of heaven; we do not view them like that at all.

E.J.B. Is it not a great thing to view the brethren as they actually are as the personnel of the heavenly vessel?

G.R.C. "A certain vessel descending like a great sheet, let down by four corners out of heaven." You can understand this being part of the mystery for it is a mysterious thing. How can it be that a vessel let down out of heaven should contain the abominable things of the earth, for creeping things are an abomination to Jehovah, and yet they are there in the vessel that is coming out of heaven.

R.S.W. Would it begin with the epistle to Romans? God's work in men—cleansing?

G.R.C. Yes, it includes God's work *in* men as well as God's work *for* men.

H.B. I was thinking about perception. He said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Do not we

need that perception, and then to feed on one another in the light of the death of Christ—"slay and eat"? Reconciliation is always in connection with the death of Christ, is it not? How wonderful reconciliation in one body is. If we could get help as to this it would help us in local difficulties.

G.R.C. That is just what I have in mind, because God has set us together in local companies where this has to be worked out practically. In some countries it is more testing than others, because there are brethren of diverse races. In Acts 13 there was a coloured man even among the prophets and teachers, but there would be no racial discrimination, I feel sure. Even here, where we are mainly of one nationality, the working out of the truth of the one body tests us.

H.B. Did not Mr. G. say in London that if there is a difference between two brothers, if both died there would be an end to it?

G.R.C. So that "slay and eat" is the command.

R.W. Perhaps we do not appreciate Christianity as Ephesians 2 presents it.

G.R.C. I am glad you refer again to Ephesians 2, because the early part of the chapter views the work of God in its completeness and says God, "has quickened us with the Christ (ye are saved by grace), and has raised us up together" (i.e. Jew and Gentile), "and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus". There you see the completeness of the work of God: the saints sitting down in the heavenlies. There are no quadrupeds or creeping things of the earth there, for they are quickened with Christ and raised up together and made to sit down together. But the second part of the chapter views the same persons here on earth reconciled to God in one body by the cross. It is like the vessel as a great sheet let down to the earth and the personnel viewed in relation to their earthly and sinful origin. It does not alter the truth of the early part of the chapter. The same persons, who, as represented by the creatures in the vessel, were so repugnant to Peter, have been raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ

Jesus. The "slay and eat" is the reconciling of the two viewpoints, the explanation of this mystery.

A.G.B. There is the word as to cleansing, and then, in Cornelius's house, the Spirit falls upon those who were hearing the word. Did not the Spirit's action crystallise and finalise in Peter's soul the practical workability of this matter? He says in chapter 11, "who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?" Does not the practical working out of the truth depend upon the presence and help of the Spirit?

G.R.C. Quite so. The cleansing is a comprehensive idea. Basically it depends on the death of Christ, so it says, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat." The blood and the water which came from His side are the means of cleansing. But then Peter says in chapter 15: 8, referring to the Gentiles, "and the heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit as to us also, and put no difference between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith". So that the next thing is faith. There is the work of Christ, which is the basis of cleansing, but then for persons to come into it there must be faith. Following that, there is sanctification of the Spirit, which, I think, completes the matter practically.

C.W.O'L.M. Does 1 Corinthians 6 help in that way? It says, "And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (verse 11).

G.R.C. That is very helpful. It brings the things together.

W.W.S. Will you say a word as to the confirming service of the Spirit? Peter is doubtful, but the Spirit speaks to him, saying, "go with them, nothing doubting". May we rightly expect the peculiar service of the Spirit in relation to our apprehending the mystery in this sense?

G.R.C. I am glad you brought that in because we need to take account of the activities of the Spirit in this section of Acts. In chapter 9 the Lord is stressed as active in the calling of Paul and securing him as an elect vessel. In the higher levels of the mystery the Lord's activities become more and more apparent, although the Spirit's service is essential all through. For instance, when Rebecca was

brought to Isaac *he* led her into his mother Sarah's tent. In the higher levels the Lord Himself as head becomes more and more prominent, but in this section the Spirit is prominent. It should draw out our affections to the Spirit as we see how active He is in the unifying of the body and in preparing the way for Paul's ministry. "In the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews of Greeks, whether bondmen or free" (1 Cor. 12: 13).

F.E.S. Would drinking into one Spirit, symbolised in the cup, make the matter of unity joyful, not irksome?

G.R.C. It is indeed a matter of joy. There is nothing irksome in it, as we give place to the Spirit. In this chapter the Spirit takes Peter in hand in a most affecting way. He says, "Behold, three men seek thee; but rise up, go down, and go with them, nothing doubting, because *I* have sent them." Who would have thought that the Spirit sent those three men? You might say Cornelius sent them, but the Spirit said *He* had sent them. He was over all these operations, taking charge of the whole matter. He does not wait for Peter to finish, but while he was yet speaking "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word". He did not even wait for water baptism, showing most manifestly how His deep feelings and the urgency of His affections led Him to act energetically in order that the full thought of the assembly from this standpoint, Jew and Gentile brought together in one body, might be brought to pass.

F.W.B. In chapter 11 Peter says, "I remembered the word of the Lord." Is not that by the service of the Spirit?

G.R.C. It is; and it shows what an impression the Lord's words in Acts 1: 5 had made on Peter. It was indelibly in his mind, and the Spirit could bring it forward at the right moment.

G.H.B. Peter also said, "the Spirit said to me" in chapter 11: 12. So that there is no doubt as to which of the Persons is acting.

G.R.C. It was a critical point in Peter's history, and it is affecting that the Spirit should say, "go with them, nothing doubting". The Spirit knows how to enable us to go forward nothing doubting.

A.B. Would you connect the power of the Spirit with the promotion of unity among the saints? We have to wait sometimes to see how things are going to come to an issue, but can we count on the Spirit?

G.R.C. It would greatly help us if we did count on the Spirit and wait upon Him; sometimes we take matters into our own hands.

F.E.S. When we have difficulty with certain persons—some may not get on well together—if we have recourse to the Spirit He will help us in the way in which He helped Peter here.

G.R.C. Quite so. If we understood the baptism of the Spirit in a practical way all these difficulties would be overcome because we should all be immersed in the Spirit.

F.W.T. Would Peter be encouraged by the authority of the Spirit. He says, “I have sent them.” As subject to the Spirit’s authority would we get help together?

G.R.C. The Spirit asserts His authority in the matter of unity. We should recognise it, I am sure.

A.M. As to Peter’s words, “In no wise, Lord”, was he addressing the Lord Jesus, or was it really the Spirit?

G.R.C. It is evident that Peter was subject. The title ‘Lord’ implies that he was a subject man. Although he says, “In no wise, Lord”, it is not in the spirit of insubjection. I would say that the voice “Rise, Peter, slay and eat” came to him with divine authority and that is why he used the word ‘Lord’, but from the setting of the chapter it would appear that the voice was actually the voice of the Spirit.

G.R.W. Can we not address the Spirit as Lord?

G.R.C. Scripture says, ‘Lord Spirit’ or ‘Jehovah Spirit’ (2 Cor. 3: 18). The Spirit is Lord in relation to His place in Deity, just as the Father is Lord (see Matt. 11: 25). Even as regards the Lord Jesus, His lordship goes beyond what He is as made Lord. The angel says, “a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”. That really means Christ Jehovah. He is Lord in His own right in Deity; but, as Man, God has made Him Lord and Christ.

J.O.S. In Isaiah 6: 8 it says, “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” When Paul quotes this section in the last chapter

of Acts he says the Holy Spirit spoke. Does that confirm what you are saying?

G.R.C. It does. "Holy, holy, holy" in that chapter seems to be an indirect reference to the Trinity. Each of the Persons in the Godhead is Lord in His own right. In John 12, referring to the same passage, it says, "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory and spoke of him" (verse 41). So the passage is applied to the Lord Jesus as well as to the Holy Spirit.

H.P. In Acts 11: 9 it says, "And a voice answered the second time out of heaven, What God has cleansed, do not thou make common"; and in verse 12 it says, "And the Spirit said to me to go with them, nothing doubting." Is Peter referring to the same Person?

G.R.C. The fact that the voice was out of heaven does not mean that it was not the Holy Spirit, because we cannot limit the Spirit at all. He never ceases to be who He is as a Person of the Godhead; and the point of the voice out of heaven, I would say, is to stress *heaven*. There was a sound out of heaven in chapter 2, a light out of heaven in chapter 9, a great vessel out of heaven and a voice out of heaven according to chapter 11.

Eu.R. Does it not leave us with an impression that the whole Godhead is delightfully active as engaged in this great matter of the reception of the Gentiles?

G.R.C. I would say that and especially the Spirit.

J.J.McC. Is that not borne out in chapter 13, where we have a further reference to the direct operations or speaking of the Spirit? You have already alluded to those who were present, a mixed gathering, and it says, "the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul", as if the Spirit had great interest in the bringing in of the Gentiles, having in mind particularly what is for the heart of Christ.

G.R.C. That is very good; it confirms what we have been saying. The Spirit was operating with a view to Saul, afterwards Paul, filling out the whole of his ministry and securing the bride for Christ.

J.P.H. And it is interesting, too, that in chapter 16, where Paul is about to go into Europe, he is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, the Spirit of Jesus did not allow him to go to Bithynia, and then a man

comes to light. I was just thinking of the Spirit Himself controlling Paul with a view to his ministry coming into the west.

G.R.C. All that is very instructive and should attach our hearts to the Holy Spirit as we see how He takes affairs in hand. How true He is to His mission, and how He asserts His sovereign authority in connection with the unity of the body and the securing of the church for Christ.

A.G.B. Does 1 Corinthians 12 stress the sovereignty of the Spirit? "But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases." That chapter refers to the way we regard one another, "those parts of the body which we esteem to be the more void of honour, these we clothe with more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; . . . that there might be no division in the body, but that the members might have the same concern one for another". Is that something like the working out of things locally in the light of the sovereignty of the Spirit?

G.R.C. I am sure it is, and it shows how the Spirit, in the way He distributes to each in particular, would help us as to mutual respect for one another. How can I have anything but respect for a brother or sister as I see the Spirit manifesting Himself in and through them? Then as we respect one another, we shall appropriate one another as cleansed by God, thus viewing one another according to our divine and heavenly origin. What strength such food affords in moving forward bodywise.

W.W.S. Is it well to remind one another that the voice of the Spirit will be heard only in certain conditions? It says in chapter 10, "But as Peter continued pondering over the vision, the Spirit said to him", and in chapter 13, to which allusion has been made, it says, "And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting." Are those the conditions necessary if we are to hear the voice of the Spirit?

G.R.C. That is very interesting—individual conditions in Peter and assembly conditions in chapter 13.

G.W. And in verse 30 of chapter 10 it says of Cornelius that he had been fasting "unto this hour".

A.B. It is interesting that two praying men are put

together. Peter had withdrawn to pray. Then he sees the vision, and the Spirit speaks to him. Cornelius also was a man marked by prayer.

G.R.C. Prayer and dependence make way for the Spirit's activities.

A.H. Could we have a word about chapter 10, verse 44, "While Peter was yet speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word." Is it the same word as Luke 15: 20, where the father "fell upon his neck and covered him with kisses"? It is the idea of embrace—a feeling matter.

G.R.C. It is an act of affection on the part of the Spirit. We were hearing last night about the love of the Spirit—is not this an example of it?

J.C.T. I was wanting to enquire about the thought of affectionate movement of the Spirit. Is it to mark us in the way that we embrace one another? There were persons hearing the word. Once this feature is in evidence there are no reserves on the part of the Spirit.

G.R.C. How lovable people are as they hear the word, how lovable they become to the saints, how lovable they are to the Spirit. He fell upon them; that is, embraced them. The love of the Spirit was drawn out to those who were hearing the word.

W.W.S. Is it the idea that the Spirit cannot withhold Himself, the lovable features were so attractive to Him.

G.R.C. He does not even wait for Peter to finish nor does He wait for water baptism.

J.O.S. When the servant saw Rebecca it says he ran to meet her.

G.R.C. Another reference to the depth of affections in the Spirit.

#### READING (4)

Acts 11: 19-26; 12: 1-5; 13: 1-4; 14: 23-27;  
15: 1-20, 22-29; 16: 5

G.R.C. We have been considering the assembly in the book of Acts. In chapter 1 we were noticing that the Lord

so speaks of the Holy Spirit before His departure that He leaves the apostles keenly anticipative as to the coming of the Spirit. In chapter 2 we considered what was seen and heard when He came, and then the testimony Peter rendered, making clear that the Holy Spirit was available to each one who repented. In chapter 9 we saw how the Lord called Saul of Tarsus, and a light out of heaven shone round about him. We dwelt upon the greatest light that has ever come to the creature, and which is embodied in Paul's ministry, his gospel, which centres in the Son of God, and his ministry of the assembly which centres in Christ. It is one great ministry, but, composed of those two parts, bringing to men the full light of God relative to His eternal purpose. This morning we were engaged with the revelation to Peter in chapter 10, the Spirit being active in a remarkable way to prepare and adjust Peter, with a view to his exercising the authority the Lord had given him—the keys of the kingdom of the heavens—in order to make way for Paul's ministry, to whom the administration of the mystery was committed. If that administration was to go through it was essential that Peter should fulfil his service in using the keys, and essential that he personally and all the holy apostles and prophets should be brought into line with what we spoke of as the lower levels of the truth of the mystery, that is, that "they who are of the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings". We considered how that bears on us in our localities and our relations with one another; we need to act as Peter did and to have the view Peter had of the vessel, as a great sheet, which contained all kinds of creatures, a vessel which comes from heaven, and goes to heaven! We are not to be hindered or turned aside from the great light which has shone through Paul, through failing to have a right outlook on the brethren. We are to have such an outlook on the brethren that we are prepared to feed on one another, "Rise, Peter, slay and *eat*." In the light of the death of Christ we are to look upon one another as cleansed by God, and to feed upon one another as those who, from the divine standpoint, have a heavenly origin.

Now we are to consider the practical functioning of the

assembly in the sphere of testimony. In the earlier part of Acts the activities were largely in the hands of the apostles, the foundation men; but now the structure is erected and the assembly as a living organism, a living structure, is functioning in its own dignity, and, as we may say, in its own precedence, because the assembly takes precedence over the greatest gifts, although it needs the gifts and their service. It is good to get a view of the dignity of the assembly as a living active vessel for God here in testimony, devoted to the interests of Christ. Chapter 11 refers to "the ears" of the assembly, and as she hears things which relate to the interests of her Husband her feelings are aroused and she takes action. It says, "the report concerning them reached the ears of the assembly which was in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas". Then chapter 12 refers to the prayers of the assembly. The assembly had a right valuation of Peter, and unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to God concerning him. The whole assembly in Jerusalem was praying. At least three local companies are mentioned in this chapter. There may have been a hundred meetings; the whole assembly was engaged in prayer and it results in angelic intervention, which we can count upon.

In chapter 13 the assembly is the vessel in which the gifts are set and in which the Holy Spirit speaks authoritatively in His own sovereign right, "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The Lord Jesus had commissioned Saul for his great work at his conversion, as he tells Agrippa. But he did not go round telling people that the Lord had commissioned him; he waits until the Holy Spirit speaks in the assembly so that there can be no question about it. Persons claiming that the Lord has commissioned them, when the brethren know nothing about it, do not carry confidence. But the great apostle patiently pursued his service at Antioch as at the bottom of the list, esteemed, I suppose, as the least of the gifted men at Antioch at that time. Although he knew in his own soul what the Lord had called him to, he waited until the Holy Spirit's voice was heard in the assembly saying, "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Who could say anything against that?

Following that, elders are referred to in Chapter 14; he chose them elders in every assembly—not *over* but '*in*' every assembly—and chapter 15 affords instruction as to the relation between elders and the assembly in a matter relating to the truth, for the assembly is seen there as "the pillar and base of the truth". The result of it all is that the assemblies generally were confirmed and increased in number every day (chapter 16: 5). One feels that if we were in the gain of these chapters that would be the result; instead of so little increase, which we often deplore, the assemblies would be confirmed and increase in number every day.

J.P.H. As we have a universal outlook in our affections and interests, does the Lord bring us news of the brethren in various parts?

G.R.C. I would think that. If we have assembly 'ears' the Lord will see to it that the tidings of what He is doing reach us.

W.J.T. Would the thought of the sheet bound at the four corners suggest what is universal?

G.R.C. It would. God "desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth . . . the testimony to be rendered in its own times" (1 Tim. 2: 4-6). That is the present testimony.

W.S.S. Is it remarkable that the persecution which took place on the occasion of Stephen should have led to the establishing of the position at Antioch? How wonderful the overruling hand of God is in these matters. We should never be discouraged if persecution comes in, for it will establish the truth more firmly amongst the saints.

G.R.C. To be scattered abroad, viewed from a natural standpoint, is a great calamity; there was a certain amount of it during the last war—called evacuation. If we gave way to nature it would bring about despondency. But there was no despondency amongst these saints. First they spoke to Jews alone, but then they went over the wall, as it were, and spoke to Greeks, announcing the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. So that if scattering takes place we should see in it all the ordering of God for the furtherance of the testimony; and the ears of the assembly would be alert as to what God is doing.

W.S.S. I suppose the Cyprians and Cyrenians would be the most unlikely kind of people to bring the truth to educated people in Antioch.

J.M. Was there at Antioch the development of body features which were hardly apparent at Jerusalem? The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, the features of Christ had developed; and then consideration one for another leads them to minister to the brethren in Judaea.

G.R.C. The truth of the body of Christ came into view definitely at Antioch. According to 1 Corinthians 12: 27, "ye are Christ's body and members in particular". So they were called Christians. You can understand how that would come about under Paul's ministry. But at the same time we have to give credit to the assembly at Jerusalem in that they had ears, they had feelings about things; and while in this broken day we cannot send out anybody in the way they did, yet it is just a question how much true assembly feelings of this kind have developed amongst us, whether we have a living interest in what is happening far afield at the moment, as, for instance, in India; and whether we are prepared to do all that we can assembly-wise. If these feelings were really developed in us, would not the outposts be better looked after? Where the saints are in large numbers they are fairly well looked after. The saints invite certain ones to minister; we are accustomed to assembly invitations. But if these feelings were more developed would not brethren be encouraged to visit and minister the word in outposts where the local brethren feel loth to invite because they are small in number and far away? It is a question of the feelings proper to the assembly as caring for the interests of Christ. Here the assembly sent out the best man available.

Eu.R. Perhaps if there were more assembly feelings with us, and more prayer for the outposts in the prayer meeting, the Lord might move more brethren to visit the outposts in India and the like. Brethren in the north of Norway are well worthy of a visit. It is most refreshing to take account of the way they move in line with the testimony.

K.P. Is that what Paul means in chapter 15: 36, when he says, "Let us return now and visit the brethren in every

city where we have announced the word of the Lord, and see how they are getting on”?

G.R.C. There it is Paul himself taking the initiative. In chapter 13 the Holy Spirit takes the initiative: “Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” But after the journey was over and they had fulfilled the work, Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return now and visit the brethren . . . and see how they are getting on.” There is room for the ministers themselves to be concerned about pastoral visits.

A.B. Is not Barnabas developed as moving in chapter 11? Certain fresh qualities come to light in him. He had already been spoken of as “son of consolation”; now he is referred to as “a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”. Later he fetches a better man, Paul.

G.R.C. Barnabas is a great model. He was the best man they had, other than the apostles. When it was a question of the work in Samaria the apostles sent Peter and John—the two best apostles. In chapter 11 the assembly sent out Barnabas to go through as far as Antioch—no doubt he established the brethren all the way along—and “having arrived and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced”. Then it says, as you say, that “he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith”; and he proved his worth in going away to Tarsus to seek out Saul, the very best man for the work in hand.

A.B. Unselfish love on his part had in mind the best for the saints.

G.R.C. It is remarkable the perception he had as to the potentialities there were in that vessel: “he went away to Tarsus to seek out Saul”.

J.M. Would you say a further word as to whether we should wait to be sent out or wait for an invitation, or move on our own exercises with the Lord?

G.R.C. We have noticed the way Saul waits at Antioch; he does not go further until the Holy Spirit says, “Separate me now Barnabas and Saul.” Prior to that he is amenable to the brethren, and to a brother seeking him out. He was there for a whole year as a result of a brother seeking him out. It shows that, as brethren, we can help one another. Then the Holy Spirit directs in chapter 13, and later he had a vision of a man saying, “Pass over into Macedonia and

help us" (ch. 16: 9), and they concluded that the Lord had called them. It appears, therefore, that generally an individual waits for direction of some kind. But what is in mind at the moment is the *assembly's* part in the matter. The assembly is spoken of as having ears and being affected by what she hears and taking action in the interests of Christ—like the virtuous woman who considers the field and buys it; she *does* something about it.

E.J.B. Would assembly ears hear what may arise in a locality by a sovereign action of the Spirit, apart from us? I was thinking of the possibility of a town or village having persons in it exercised as to the assembly, and yet knowing nothing as to procedure. Assembly ears might hear something of that?

G.R.C. That has happened in times past, and meetings have been established as a result. In our locality at the moment there is a work going on, and it is an exercise as to whether God may secure some assembly material from it.

W.S.S. Would you say a word as to the *assembly* sending out in chapter 11, and the *Holy Spirit* sending Barnabas and Saul in chapter 13? We have been taught that the assembly does not preach or teach or send out.

G.R.C. Have we been taught that the assembly does not send out?

W.S.S. According to chapter 11 the assembly *did* send out. I am seeking help as to the general principle; I am not suggesting that in this broken day these things would occur as they did at the beginning. But should these feelings and sensibilities govern us even though we cannot send out in this way? If the affections of the assembly are touched surely there *will* be results, the assembly will be praying about it and something will be done—not in the way of official sending out, but something will be done.

G.F.S. Even if only in a practical way.

G.R.C. Quite so. The assembly will be prepared to support in a practical way suitable persons who are able to go.

W.S.S. We need to be very much exercised in our localities in regard to these matters.

G.R.C. We are used to the idea that a servant is responsible to the Lord and in the ultimate issue that must

govern him; but have we tended to make service too individual? According to chapter 11 there are the ears of the assembly and also the feelings and actions of the assembly relative to the interests of Christ.

R.W. In chapter 8 it says that Philip going down to a city of Samaria preached Christ to them. Is that not the kind of preaching that the Spirit would link the assembly with?

G.R.C. I think so; but in chapter 8 the *apostles* take action. In chapter 11 it is the *assembly* that acts.

E.C.L. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 considers and acts in view of all the interests of her husband, and in doing so she is blessed in all her work. Is the assembly moving on that line here?

A.L.B. One of the things it says of the virtuous woman is that she delivers girdles to the merchant. I was thinking of the binding together—involving Barnabas going out.

G.R.C. That is an important feature; binding together resulted. Barnabas goes to Antioch and then seeks out Saul, and they teach for a whole year; and when the famine came anyone of the disciples that was well off determined, each of them, to send to the brethren who dwelt in Judaea to minister to them. So that the “girdles” were very much in evidence; the assemblies were bound tightly together in the bonds of divine love. The truth of the body, Jew and Gentile, brought together in one body, was seen as an actual working reality in the sight of heaven.

A.B. Does it show that the governmental dealings of God in the persecution, and His providential dealings in the famine, all worked together, through divine love, for the development of what is pleasing to God in the assembly?

G.R.C. That is very good. They were designed to knit the assembly together, Jew and Gentile. All God’s dealings have the prosperity of the assembly in view.

C.C.I. Paul spoke of the burden of all the assemblies in 2 Corinthians 11. Would he have in mind that, as local companies, we should be alert to what is happening throughout the earth? So that sorrows in any locality affect the saints universally in relation to the truth of the assembly.

G.R.C. One of the great points in his letter to the Corinthians was to deliver them from parochialism; they were so proud of themselves and so self-satisfied that they did not look beyond their own locality.

J.L.W. Is that something we need to bear in mind in our meetings for care? We tend to be very parochial.

G.R.C. We do. In Corinthians Paul referred to universal customs and directions. He also told them what was going on at Ephesus: "for a great door is opened to me and an effectual one, and the adversaries many" (1 Cor. 16: 9). They knew nothing about it, because they had not assembly ears. A meeting wrapped up in itself has not assembly ears at all.

A.G.B. Is it interesting to see that the unceasing prayer in chapter 12 stands related to a direct and venomous attack on the assembly with a view to nullifying the unifying affections working at the end of chapter 11? The attack was defeated and at the end of chapter 12 it says that the word of God grew and spread itself.

G.R.C. "*At that time Herod the king laid his hands on some of those of the assembly.*" It is not simply some of the disciples of the Lord, it is the assembly that is stressed now, a living organism so precious to God. No one can lay his hands on some of the assembly except at mortal peril to himself, no matter how great he may be. Where true assembly features are developed they are so precious to God that He will not have them destroyed. The attack was used by God to bring out the further feature of assembly prayer.

A.G.B. There might be a danger of our being overwhelmed by such a venomous attack, but if it develops assembly prayer God comes in, and thus way is made for the word of God to grow and spread itself. The result is evident.

G.R.C. I wonder whether we realise the power and efficacy of assembly prayer. According to Matthew 18: 19, "if two of you shall agree on the earth" (that is, two of the assembly) "concerning any matter, whatsoever it may be that they shall ask, it shall come to them from my Father who is in the heavens". Do we believe that the Lord gives us a 'blank cheque' in regard to assembly prayer? The Lord, in His own case, says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot

now call upon my Father, and he will furnish me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26: 53). The Lord did not ask for them, and the assembly may not always be free to seek deliverance; nevertheless twelve legions of angels were available. *One* angel was sufficient in this chapter.

J.P.H. We were not afraid during the war to pray for Cairo, and God stopped a great army; and Cairo and the assembly there were preserved.

G.R.C. That was an important meeting during the war.

A.H. What would be the effect of James being slain in relation to what you have said? There was a great deal of exercise as to Peter, but the saints did not seem to be alert as to James.

G.R.C. They were certainly alert as to Peter. Unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to God concerning him. The final result was not only that an angel released Peter but that an angel of the Lord smote Herod because he did not give glory to God, and he expired eaten of worms. But over against that the word of God grew and spread itself—wonderful result of prayer! The Lord bringing this down to any 'two of you' in Matthew shows that the resource of assembly prayer is always available.

F.E.S. Do you think the Lord is allowing the trade-union element to assert itself so that the feature of prayer and the fruit of it may be encouraged amongst us?

G.R.C. And not only trade unions but trade associations; I believe assembly prayer would work wonders in these matters. Some trade associations are just as murderous as trade unions. If you do not belong to them you cannot get goods. But all these things, I have no doubt, can be met by assembly prayer. What can God not do!

Eu.R. Do you think it is necessary to stress the murderous element, however nice the associations may appear in their activities? Would not 2 Corinthians 6: 14, "be not diversely yoked with unbelievers", be sufficient?

G.R.C. I would think so; and you certainly have what is murderous here: "at that time Herod the king laid his hands on some of those of the assembly to do them hurt, and slew James".

R.S.W. Do you think God would get spoil from the slaying of James, the suffering spirit of Christ being developed in the assembly?

G.R.C. I think so; and also from calamities which happen nowadays. This was a great calamity. It was persecution, and he died for the testimony; yet there was not the glory attaching to it that marked the death of Stephen. It was just the wanton act of a wicked man. God allows, at times, what appears to be a great calamity among the saints to bring out assembly feelings and to quicken assembly prayers.

D.W.W. In what way did you mean that trade associations can be met by prayer?

G.R.C. God can enable His saints to get through and gain a livelihood in spite of them.

W.J.T. You mean that their power would be broken in answer to the prayers of the assembly.

G.R.C. God can completely break the power of these confederacies and He can come in in other ways and provide for His own. We are told in Isaiah not to fear confederacies, but "Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (Isa. 8: 13). When you think of the angelic resources available, what can God not do? How easily He can deal with these seemingly powerful men!

H.P. Does Peter himself get the gain of the scripture quoted in Isaiah? He uses it in his epistle. Does it show that the government of God is on behalf of those who fear him, and against those who do not?

G.R.C. Peter's epistle helps. "Sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts."

S.H. Have we to notice that in spite of such pressure, when assembly prayer is proceeding, assembly administration proceeds normally? According to verse 25 the service of Barnabas and Saul was fulfilled. It was part of assembly administration.

G.R.C. Quite so. It is interesting to see how this attack was timed by the enemy. Had it dismayed and discouraged the brethren they would have failed to get the gain of the ministration which Barnabas and Saul had brought; and the remarkable effect, to which our brother has referred, of the girdles uniting Jew and Gentile practically in one body, would have failed to materialise; but it did not fail! The resource of the saints was in prayer; Peter was released, Herod was destroyed; and the chapter concludes

by referring back to Barnabas and Saul, indicating that this service of binding the saints together had been fulfilled.

W.S.S. Would you say a word as to Peter's experience in this chapter coming before the Antioch position in chapter 13?

G.R.C. Barnabas and Saul carried in their souls the gain of all that transpired in chapter 12; they would bring the gain of it to the assembly in Antioch. It says, "there were in Antioch, in the assembly which was there, prophets and teachers . . ." What a dignified view of the assembly! This is not now in Jerusalem. The assembly in Jerusalem had had a distinctive place. But now the heavenly side of the truth was out and the Spirit of God brings out the glory and dignity of a local assembly as seen at Antioch. The Spirit loves to adorn the assembly with distinctive gifts: "Barnabas, and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul". What a mixed company! It reminds us of what was in the great vessel like a sheet, in chapter 10. These men were among those whom God had cleansed, and not only had He cleansed them but they were gifted men and assembly adornment.

G.F.S. You were stressing that they were *in* the assembly.

G.R.C. Quite; God had set certain in the assembly, and here they were.

A.McG. Would those set in the assembly bring out one side, the public side, and then is there the feeling side in regard to the body, God having tempered the members?

G.R.C. Just so. Underlying all is the truth of the body, and as members of it we have the same respect one for another. Then it says, "as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said . . ." What a dignity this gives to the assembly that this glorious Person, the Holy Spirit, is there! While we know this is special, yet the way it is set would leave one with the impression of the normality of the Spirit's presence and speaking in the assembly. As we are together, in holy conditions, ministering to the Lord and fasting, it would be a normal thing for the Holy Spirit to speak. What dignity that gives to the assembly!

J.L.W. The gifted men are not over the assembly—the Holy Spirit is in that position administratively.

G.R.C. That is important. They were *in* the assembly which was there. Gifted persons are not to assume to be over the assembly. The assembly is the greatest vessel, and in that vessel there are great persons. So “the Holy Spirit said, Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”. Marvellous thing to think of the assembly in that way as the vessel where the Spirit is and where His voice is heard expressly!

G.W.B. Are these conditions spiritually suitable to His voice being heard, as ministering to the Lord and fasting?

G.R.C. They were ministering to the Lord, that is, engaged in priestly service. Priestly service should underlie all that we do. Paul said, “God . . . whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of his Son” (Rom. 1: 9). The word ‘serve’ there means priestly service. Even when Paul was preaching he was serving as a priest. Fasting, I think, means the refusing of natural tastes and desires, and that leaves the Spirit free. The Spirit should have complete liberty in the local assembly, and then He will use whom He will. If we have natural likes and dislikes it tends to quench the Spirit. The Spirit distributes to each in particular as He will. If we are ministering to the Lord and fasting we are prepared for the Spirit to do as He will. If the flesh had been active at Antioch some of the brethren might have said, Why choose the one at the bottom of the list? Why go from Barnabas right down to Saul? But as ministering to the Lord and fasting they were ready for whatever the Spirit indicated.

A.G.B. Do I gather that this sending finalised itself in chapter 16? What would be in the mind of the Spirit at this point would be the filling out of all Paul’s service, going westward even as today.

G.R.C. Quite so. The Spirit had in mind all Paul’s service, although in divine wisdom He puts Barnabas with him at the beginning. The Spirit is always considerate, acting in a manner calculated to carry the full confidence of the brethren; He would never do anything to cause cleavage amongst brethren. So He links Barnabas with Saul, and Barnabas was an excellent companion for this first journey because of his unselfishness. While to begin

with he had the first place, before they had gone far Paul was in the ascendancy, and that is what the Spirit had in mind.

J.P.H. Is the secret of the Spirit's selection of Paul seen in verse 9, "Saul, who also is Paul"?

G.R.C. Because he is little, you mean—that is just it. The Spirit will use us if we are small enough.

F.F. There were no local peculiarities or customs at Antioch. It says, "in Antioch in the assembly which was there . . ."

G.R.C. There should be no local habits or customs. It is a great sorrow to hear people speaking of what 'we' do in the sense of local customs. "We" normally is the universal "we". "We have no such custom," Paul says; that is the universal "we". But to proceed, the sending out in chapter 13 was a new departure, and you can understand the Spirit Himself coming into it, so that there should be no question about it, but that it should carry full confidence. It was evident to all that *He* was governing the reception of the Gentiles in chapter 10. Now *He* is sending out Barnabas and Saul. Then in chapter 14 we come to the choosing of elders. Apostolic authority, in the actual person of the apostles, was a passing phase. But under Paul's economy of the assembly no apostle could remain in every place to help the local meeting. Therefore in chapter 14: 23 it says, "having chosen them elders in each assembly". Note that it is "*in* each assembly", not *over* each assembly. There is no thought of an elder being over the assembly any more than there is any thought of gift being over the assembly; gifts are in the assembly, and elders are in the assembly, as Peter says, "the elders which are among you" (1 Pet. 5: 1)—that is where they are, they are *among* you.

W.S.S. I suppose the passage in chapter 14 would link up with chapter 20: 28: "take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers", having in mind the departure of the apostles?

G.R.C. Yes. So eldership is essential for the care of the assembly. We have to remember that the principle of eldership governs the care-meeting, because when it is a question of caring for the assembly of God the apostle

gives the qualifications of overseers. He says, "if any one does not know how to conduct his own house, how shall he take care of the assembly of God?" (1 Tim. 3: 5). We should all *aspire* to the work of overseership, but the actual care of the assembly of God is in the hands of the elders or overseers.

W.S.S. That would preserve us from the democratic spirit.

G.R.C. We have to beware of that spirit. What I am saying does not mean that the care-meeting is not open to all; it *is* open to all, as indicated in chapter 15, and we are glad we have so many young people in fellowship. At our care-meetings quite young persons are present, and we would desire that from early days they might aspire to exercise oversight, for "if any one aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work". You cannot be too young to desire to care for the assembly of God. But, nevertheless, we must avoid democratic principles; we must avoid the idea of power from below, for the principle of Christianity is "power from on high".

G.F.S. Would you say that spirituality is an essential feature in relation to eldership?

G.R.C. Yes. The verse quoted (chapter 20: 24) speaks of the Holy Spirit setting them as overseers.

J.W.G. Does what is educational enter into the care-meeting? I was thinking particularly of the younger brethren.

G.R.C. It does, and also it is important that every conscience should be carried in view of anything going further to the assembly. Every conscience should be carried and enlightened. The consciences of all need enlightening as to principles involved in any matter; but we must keep to scripture as to the care of the assembly being in the hands of elders. I am not speaking of official elders for we *cannot* appoint official elders in these days. If any claim to be official elders the Lord will not support them. But the Holy Spirit, having the care of the assembly, sees to it that in every assembly there are those qualified to care. So it says here, "elders in each assembly"; in Titus 1: 5 it is "elders in each city". But what we have to remember is that not only are there elders in a city but elders in each assembly, which means each gathering in the

city. The Holy Spirit would not leave one gathering in a city without the element of eldership. Paul speaks of “the assembly which is in thine house” (Philem. 2); in every one such assembly there would be the element of eldership. Of course, elders in the city add great strength to the whole position.

C.R.W. The elder brethren could not possibly decide any matter except as assembled with all the saints, could they?

G.R.C. The next chapter helps us as to that. We have a very serious matter there and it brings out what the assembly is as “the pillar and base of the truth”. When the truth is at stake the assembly takes the matter up. First of all the assembly at Antioch took it up because it says, “they therefore, having been set on their way by the assembly” went to Jerusalem; and then it says, “being arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the assembly, and the apostles, and the elders”. The assembly is put first. Throughout this section of Acts the assembly is seen to be paramount, and it remains paramount throughout the dispensation. Then as the passage proceeds and the conflict had commenced, it says in verse 6, “the apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter”. It does not suggest they were together alone—the whole company appears to be there. The *discussion*, however, was in the hands of the apostles and elders, “much discussion having taken place”. But the discussion was apparently in the presence of all the brethren.

G.F.S. Verse 12 would confirm that: “all the multitude kept silence and listened to Barnabas and Paul.”

G.R.C. Yes. So that first they were all listening to Barnabas and Paul in verse 4, then the opposers speak in verse 5; and then the apostles and elders discussed the matter in verses 6 and 7. They would not expect young brothers to take part in a discussion of that kind, when the truth was at stake, but it would be educative for all—there was much discussion. The discussion was needed so that the minds of the brethren might be clarified as to the whole issue. Discussion belongs to the care-meeting. Then the Holy Spirit takes charge of the matter authoritatively. “Peter, standing up, said to them, Brethren . . .” It was now, one would judge, an assembly meeting. Peter

was speaking authoritatively, bringing in a word of wisdom by the Spirit, as it says, "to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge". Peter brings in a word of wisdom. Then Barnabas and Paul in verse 12 go on to relate all that God had wrought among the nations, which would confirm the word of wisdom. Then, when they held their peace, James, by the Spirit, gives a word of knowledge with a supporting scripture and is enabled to express a judgment which carried the consciences of all the saints. In the final issue they say, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us", that is, the Holy Spirit was authoritatively in the matter.

A.McG. It looks as if the meeting of assembly character followed very closely on the meeting for care.

G.R.C. It was a very special occasion; but we can just get the general principle of the way elders functioned in the care-meeting, as we speak, and then the way the Holy Spirit came into the matter authoritatively in the assembly. It says, "it seemed good to the apostles and to the elders, *with the whole assembly*, to send chosen men from among them"; and later, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us".

B.G.H. Is it important that James gives a distinct and definite judgment which all understood, even the simplest person present?

G.R.C. If the Holy Spirit has His place a clear judgment will always be expressed. This is specially important when the truth is at stake.

W.J.T. Would Micah 5: 5 help, "When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes of men"? The brethren have shepherds and princes to raise against the enemy in his movements.

G.R.C. Quite so. Elders are not over the assembly but in the assembly, as already remarked. Peter speaks of "the elders which are among you", and warns them not to exercise oversight as lording it over their possessions. Normally their discussions would take place in the presence of the brethren; there are sometimes sordid and defiling details which might profitably be kept out of the care-meeting; but, apart from these, things should be

ventilated before all the brethren. I say that because later in this book (chapter 21 : 18) the elders come together apart from the brethren generally, and they do mischief. It says, "on the morrow Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders came there"; it does not say the brethren were there, but "all the elders came there. And having saluted them, he related one by one the things which God had wrought among the nations by his ministry". Then they proceeded to give Paul wrong advice. That is what happened when the elders gathered independently of the saints.

E.J.B. How do you regard Galatians 6: 1 in this regard? "If even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one . . ." Would that call for spiritual eldership?

G.R.C. Yes. That applies in all cases whether a matter comes to the assembly or not; restoration must be in the hands of those who are spiritual.

Rem. It says in James 5: 14, "Is any sick among you? Let him call to him the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord . . . and if he be one who has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him."

G.R.C. In that case it is the exercise of the person who calls to him the elders of the assembly, and it is for a particular purpose. But I wondered whether the scripture in Acts 21 shows the danger of elders assuming an official status and acting on their own. The advice given on that occasion was unspiritual, it was wrong, it was just expediency. Normally, we need the atmosphere provided by brethren as together to keep the discussions on a spiritual level. The assembly, as such, is in the background all the time as being the greatest vessel. The elders are not over it.

E.J.B. The elders as a whole would not meet together except in the care-meeting?

G.R.C. No, unless there is something of a sordid character of which some details might be spared the brethren.

E.J.B. Would all the elders be involved in that, or might it be just one or two godly ones?

G.R.C. Just those who are directly handling the case. We need to avoid the idea of official elders in all that we are

saying. Nevertheless we must recognise that the care of the assembly is especially the responsibility of those who have the moral qualifications of eldership.

H.M. Would it be particularly necessary in a day of brokenness to take the brethren into our confidence and to bring things to the care-meeting, although we cannot speak of having elders in the way they had them at the beginning?

G.R.C. Just so.

A.H. Is it not instructive that in the beginning of chapter 21 we have a wonderful indication of what lies in the Spirit? The mind of the Spirit is given by a little company of saints. They say to Paul by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. My own exercise is that we need much help as to the recognition in a local company of the presence of the Spirit, the local company being divine territory, and it should not be invaded by elders from other parts. I think it has been trespassed against.

G.R.C. Elders normally function in the local companies.

A.H. Are we warranted in going beyond that? What you have referred to in Acts 15 is a matter of this very thing.

G.R.C. A man is what he is wherever he is; but his special responsibility would be in his locality. But what you say as to having respect for the local company as a vessel of the Spirit is of great importance. The beginning of Acts 21 is remarkable. A simple company of saints at Tyre could tell the great apostle by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. It shows the predominance of the assembly; the assembly must predominate in everything.

Rem. Paul found the disciples there; they were not expecting him.

G.R.C. He found the disciples, and moved *among* them in such a manner that they were free in his company and the Spirit could use them to speak to him. The greatness of the assembly shines out in that. It is a contrast to what happened in Jerusalem where he goes to James and meets the elders by themselves.

R.W. In view of what has been said, is it not good to distinguish between what relates to elders and what is priestly? A brother with priestly discernment is helpful anywhere.

## READING (5)

Acts 19: 1-10; 20: 17-21, 26-28. Ephesians 1: 5-12;  
3: 10-12, 20-21

G.R.C. We have been engaged with the assembly as presented in the book of the Acts. This afternoon we arrive at the objective with which we commenced, that is, to consider the valuation that God Himself places upon the assembly, according to Acts 20: 28, where the apostle says, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". He is viewing the assembly of God, as down here, needing care and shepherding. The Holy Spirit has the matter in hand and sets certain ones *in* (not "over") the flock as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God. This work is to be done from the standpoint of the valuation that God places upon this great vessel which, in its final setting as presented in Ephesians 3 and also in other passages such as Revelation 21, is seen in its glory as the trusted vessel to which He commits, through eternity, the responsibility of diffusing the light of God and of leading the universe in the ascription of praise to God. So from this standpoint it is a most choice and august vessel, the acme of divine workmanship. God has secured a vessel able to take on the greatest responsibility of any creature vessel in the universe, and to fulfil it in the power of the Spirit and in the power of union with Christ, without the slightest risk of breakdown and without coming short in any way. There will be carried out in it a service which is adequate to the greatness of God Himself, both in the ascription of glory to Him and the diffusion of the light of His glory to the universe. Oh, that we had an appreciation of it! It involves the following of Paul's ministry from beginning to end, and no doubt the setting at Ephesus was ordered by God to bring that home to us. Paul finds about twelve men who had not yet begun their Christian experience, for they had not even heard that the Holy Spirit was come. They did not yet belong to

the assembly; they had been baptised only with the baptism of John; and so Paul begins with this material, and under his tuition they are carried from the beginning of true Christian experience, that is, Christian baptism, to the great climax, as to which Paul says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27). To go through that course of instruction requires the greatest application, and, therefore, in chapter 19 and again in chapter 20, verse 1, they are called "disciples". I think, in the period covered by Paul's ministry, the saints are generally called "brethren", but Ephesus is an exception. It says, "Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain *disciples*" (19: 1-2), and then in verse 9, "but when some were hardened and disbelieved, speaking evil of the way before the multitude, he left them and separated the *disciples*, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this took place for two years". Then when he is leaving them the Spirit of God still calls them disciples, "after the tumult had ceased, Paul having called the *disciples* to him . . ." That title goes with Matthew, the assembly gospel, where the saints are called "disciples" *after* the Lord rose from the dead; and also with John where they are similarly called "disciples" after the Lord rose from the dead.

—McK. Will you distinguish between the two, the "disciples" and the "brethren"?

G.R.C. Paul's initial aim wherever he went was to bring about family conditions amongst the saints, because the warmth of family affections must underlie the truth of the assembly. Thessalonians brings in Paul's foundations upon which he would erect the Corinthian structure; and so in connection with his ministry in Acts the term "brethren" is prominent. I would not think that that was at all lacking at Ephesus, only I think the Spirit of God at this point in Acts would stress the paramount need of discipleship in whole-hearted application to the truth, if we are really to get the gain of Paul's ministry. It is a most extensive ministry and requires the greatest application, in fact *daily* application. It is not sufficient to seek to follow Paul's ministry only in 'city readings' as we call them; we must apply ourselves to it every day, and so it

stresses “reasoning *daily* in the school of Tyrannus”. This went on for two years, and I would think there would have been keen interest among the disciples and that they would not have missed one day out of the two years.

S.H. Is it significant that in chapter 14 we have disciples encircling Paul after he had been stoned in Lystra and dragged out of the city and left for dead? Then later he is the only one who is said to have made disciples; he made many disciples (Acts 14: 21). I was thinking of Matthew 28: 19.

G.R.C. These scriptures are very interesting, showing how true he was to the commission of Matthew 28. He made “disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”, with a view to their becoming assembly material.

F.O.W. Teaching links with the *school* of Tyrannus.

G.R.C. And also with the thought of disciples.

Eu.R. What is involved in making disciples? Would it suggest a state of subjection, to be a learner?

G.R.C. Yes, also affection for the Lord Jesus, prepared to follow Him in reproach.

Ques. So would you think that no one could make disciples who was not a disciple himself?

G.R.C. I am sure of that.

R.W. Is Apollos in that category? It says of him that he was “an eloquent man, who was mighty in the scriptures . . . He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in his spirit, he spoke and taught exactly the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. . . . And Aquila and Priscilla, having heard him, took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly. And when he purposed to go into Achaia, the brethren wrote to the disciples engaging them to receive him, who, being come, contributed much to those who believed through grace” (Acts 18: 24–7).

G.R.C. That is good. It shows that the spirit of discipleship marked Apollos. He was willing to learn from those who, in the public eye, were a simple brother and sister, yet they were more spiritual than he.

C.E.B. Would you say a word more as to the school of Tyrannus, because is it not in the school of Tyrannus where disciples are made?

G.R.C. I would say it is in the school of Tyrannus that disciples are *instructed*. I think the making of disciples must depend on the personality of the one with whom they come into touch, because these are already said to be disciples; they had already been affected, possibly by Apollos, who had been at Ephesus, "he was instructed in the way of the Lord . . . and taught exactly the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts 18: 25).

H.B. Would it involve influence?

G.R.C. I think so. Should we not all make disciples? If so, it is essential that we should be true disciples ourselves, subject and ready to learn, keen, too, with our affections engaged so that we are prepared to go to any length to know the whole truth. Then we shall affect other people. Paul was like that himself; Paul was prepared to go through anything for the truth's sake.

J.O.S. How would you apply the *daily* instruction?

G.R.C. Should we not keep the truth in its highest levels, as committed to Paul, before us every day, so that it enters into our *daily* exercises? If so, we shall never think there are too many occasions of coming together to get help. We may not be able to be present on every occasion, but we shall never complain of the number of occasions on which the brethren are together. It seems that it was normal in Acts for the brethren to be together every day. They were daily in the temple (Acts 2: 46), and there was the daily ministration (Acts 6: 1).

J.O.S. Do we need to be more concerned as to the daily reading of the higher levels of the ministry?

G.R.C. I think it would help if we knew how to regulate ourselves and our time better, so as to give the things of God first place.

C.R.W. It says of Bartimaeus that he followed Jesus in the way. We read a great deal about "the way" in Acts. Is it a question of earnestly following in the way?

G.R.C. I think it is, and of realising that it is a course of instruction which requires application and is worthy of the greatest faculties that a man possesses as empowered by the Holy Spirit.

F.W.T. Does Matthew give the greatest result of discipleship, "it is sufficient that the disciple should become as his teacher"?

G.R.C. We should like, as far as we can, to keep pace with Paul.

C.C.I. Does discipleship underlie the matter of responsibility in the assembly and the worship of God?

G.R.C. I would think a true disciple is one who feels the responsibility laid upon him to follow the truth the whole way.

C.C.I. That is, the matter is distinct from the matter of privilege, as suggested in "the brethren".

G.R.C. There is the side of privilege, but the school of Tyrannus does not exactly suggest privilege. It suggests a place where the greatest application and concentration is needed, and a true disciple would feel the responsibility of following the truth right to its climax and not in any way stopping short. Paul says, "for I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God". Have we got as far as that? I am sure we should like to know more about it.

A.A.B. Have we an example of a true disciple in Timothy, one who fully followed things up?

G.R.C. Timothy is a great encouragement to us; he fully followed up what he had seen and heard in Paul.

J.O.S. Is there a suggestion in the fact that the name is Tyrannus? There is an element of compulsion in the matter if we are to arrive at the end.

G.R.C. Quite so. Paul says in Philippians, "not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also *I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus*. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (chapter 3: 13-15).

A.M.M. Would the disciples understand liberty and co-operation in moving together and helping together? I was thinking of the number twelve. There was something which held them together in true interest and affection; is that not a basic thing?

G.R.C. Twelve is a love number, as we have often been reminded. If the number twelve, in a spiritual sense, is truly present with us there will be a working out of the whole truth in love. God gives us persons to walk with in our localities. There may not be many, but if the number twelve is there spiritually we shall find, amongst those available, the opportunity to work out the truth practically and concretely for God.

C.C.I. In Acts 20, where Paul was teaching publicly and in every house, he also says, "Wherefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I ceased not admonishing each one of you with tears." It is not only what is done in the meeting, but the conversation that goes on in the houses of the saints.

G.R.C. The meetings energise us. Some say there are so many meetings they cannot visit the saints, but Paul did both. He had meetings every day, and he visited every house, working night and day. Some of us want fixed hours and do not want to work overtime, but Paul knew nothing about that kind of thing.

Ques. He also earned his living in the normal way; he had not retired.

G.R.C. He worked with his own hands to keep himself and those with him.

H.W. I was going to ask whether discipleship is preliminary to being a good workman?

G.R.C. Just so, and I am sure if we follow up Paul's teaching we shall learn the plan. He was a wise architect and did not begin his work without having the whole plan of the assembly before him. We also need to have the plan, otherwise we are just beating the air.

H.F. Is that why in the next section the word 'announcing' is used, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27)? Does the announcing correspond with the Spirit's service in John 16, bringing back a report?

G.R.C. It shows the dignity of the whole matter. Ephesians 1 helps as to the counsel of God.

G.F.S. Would both the lower and higher levels of the truth be involved in it?

G.R.C. That is just what I was thinking. Ephesians 1 unfolds God's will. In Colossians Paul prays to the end

that the saints might be “filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (1: 9), and then Epaphras was “combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (4: 12). Ephesians 1 speaks of the will of God in three parts: first, the good pleasure of His will, which links with Paul’s gospel, the truth of sonship, “having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (1: 5). Then God would have His sons intelligent as to His great plan for the universe, and so Paul speaks of “the riches of his grace which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will” (1: 9). Sonship is a very great matter but is not difficult to understand, whereas all wisdom and intelligence is needed to understand the mystery of God’s will, “according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times to head up all things in the Christ” (1: 9–10). That involves the assembly as associated with Him in the headship, according to verses 22–23. Finally, he speaks of “the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his *own* will”, which includes what we have referred to as the lower levels of the mystery because it is the working out of things in the ways of God. *Purpose* is the great objective, but in reaching it He works all things according to the counsel of His own will. It is the counsel of His will that tests our wills. The good pleasure of His will in marking us out for sonship does not test our wills, we are delighted with that; the mystery of His will does not test our wills, although it tests our intelligence. But in working all things according to the counsel of His own will He cuts right across the will of man. He does not consult man, for He takes counsel with no one but Himself. “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?” (Rom. 11: 35). The counsel of God’s will tests our wills, but if it is submitted to it will lead to a doxology with us, as it did with Paul in Romans 11: 33–5; and this, in turn, makes way for the doxology relative to purpose in Romans 16: 25–7.

A.B. Would it lead to subjection in regard to God’s ways with us?

G.R.C. It would. It needed subjection at the outset. "That *we* should be to the praise of his glory who have pre-trusted in the Christ" refers to Jewish believers, and "in whom *ye* also have trusted, having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" refers to Gentile believers, while "who is the earnest of *our* inheritance" means that Jew and Gentile share a common inheritance. The counsel of God's will decreed that the Jew should come in first, and then the Gentile, and that both should have part in the inheritance. That is what tested Peter when he saw the "heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending as a great sheet . . . in which were all the quadrupeds and creeping things of the earth" (Acts 10: 11-12). That vision related to the counsel of God's will and enters, in principle, into the make-up of every local meeting. We have no choice as to our companions; we may have persons of different colour, race, nationality and social status in the same meeting. We would not have chosen such companions at all, but God has chosen them and has put us together to work out the truth practically. Are we going to quarrel with the counsel of His will, or shall we not rather submit in a spirit of worship saying, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor, or who has first given to him, and it shall be rendered to him? For of him, and through him, and for him are all things; to him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11: 34-6). His arrangements are all part of the working out of His perfect plan.

A.H. Does Job arrive at this by the way of the breaking of his own will? He said, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine. Who is he that obscureth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered what I did not understand; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42: 2-3).

G.R.C. That is very helpful. Job repented in dust and ashes, and that is where we need to be; and that is where an understanding of Romans 9, 10 and 11 would bring us. We are just vessels of mercy. We all belong to the clay of fallen humanity and God has been pleased to take up certain ones. There is no question of superiority. Not

one of us has any rights. Every believer, if he understands Romans 9, 10 and 11 rightly, recognises that. Whatever is brought to pass of any value must be of Him and through Him and for Him. There is no glory to man at all.

R.S.W. Does Elihu bring Job to that standpoint, to view things according to God?

G.R.C. He does, and we need to help one another so that we accept the counsel of God's will and do not resist His purpose.

J.P.H. Does that enter into God's ways with us personally? Whatever they may mean and however we may feel them, we are happy about them, and happy with Him, recognising that they work out for added wealth in the service of God.

G.R.C. I am sure of that: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11 : 33-4). He does not take counsel with anyone in what He does with each one of us in His ways and in what He may bring upon us. He takes counsel with Himself in perfect wisdom and knowledge, with a view to reaching the end He has in view, that is, His purpose: "the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will."

W.S.S. Did counsel enter into His early movements in Genesis?

G.R.C. I have no doubt that the counsel of His will entered into creation, and into the Incarnation, too.

A.M.M. Is it at this point that the service of God begins? It says here, "that we should be to the praise of his glory". If we are to have an intelligent part in the service of God we must be marked by subjection to His will.

C.W.O'L.M. Is not the fullest cost of the working out of the counsel of His own will seen in the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane? I was thinking of the praises of Israel as the working out of Psalm 22.

G.R.C. That is very affecting indeed. You are thinking of the depths of Christ's sufferings in that Psalm, and all that entered into the counsel of God's will. Who could measure what it cost Christ?

Eu.R. The verse we are so accustomed to in relation to

the service of God, "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" (Heb. 2: 12), comes from that same suffering psalm.

G.R.C. The Lord's motive in going into death according to Psalm 22 was to lay the basis for the declaration of the name of His God and to secure the praises of His God.

A.B. Would you think the praise of His glory relates to the administration of the fulness of times? I was wondering whether it would work out at the Lord's coming and go on to the eternal day.

G.R.C. It will, but all that is anticipated now, because it says the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. What will accrue to God in and through the assembly in the world to come and in the eternal state is to accrue *now* in a spiritual way, because the Holy Spirit is here.

J.O.S. Would you say that the land as apportioned by Joshua is a kind of pattern of *our* inheritance, fitting into the thought of the counsel of God's will; but in David the service of praise involves *God's* inheritance in the saints?

G.R.C. Quite so.

G.W.B. Are we thus acquiring a knowledge of God? Is it thus that we have substance for His service?

G.R.C. Just so. We are getting help as to the last phase of the service—the worship of God, as such; but I am sure most of us have felt, since the exercise was raised, how little substance we have for that phase of the service.

H.B. Would not the sense of mercy preserve us in freshness in our relations with God? David says, "but as for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God".

G.R.C. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. If we give Him His place we shall be ever fresh in our communications with one another, in our response to Christ and in the worship of God. He is the source of all freshness.

A.H. I am wanting help as to "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", and the whole portion down to verse 14. I am asking for help, because I observe that you are speaking much of God, but are you referring to God as Father or are you referring to God in the full sense now?

G.R.C. I would think he begins by saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", because sonship in the first instance is before his mind. But I do not think the expression "his will", as used throughout this section, could be limited to one Person of the Godhead. J.N.D. has said that God is One in will, in thought, in purpose; that there is separate "willing" but only one will.

A.M.M. Does not the apostle begin with God's will, "apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will"?

G.R.C. Quite so. In Ephesians 3, about which we ought now to speak, God's assembly is brought before us in a very powerful way. Paul says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God." I think "all the counsel of God" covers all that we have been saying: "the good pleasure of his will", "the mystery of his will" and "the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his own will". It is a general expression covering the whole purpose of God and the way He brings it to pass, an inclusive idea. It is in the light of that that Paul uses the remarkable expression, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". In Ephesians 3 he refers to the assembly as functioning at the present time. The book of Revelation helps as to the functioning of the assembly in the world to come and in the eternal state; but we need Ephesians 3 in order to understand how we can function now and anticipate what is actually future now, and so we read, "in order that *now* to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God" (3: 10). We ought to notice that in this chapter *God* is prominent. It speaks of "the mystery hidden throughout the ages in *God*, who has created all things in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by the faith of him" (verses 9-12). I think the word "boldness" links with the thought of God in His greatness, and that these verses suggest the assembly functioning both in administration and, what is more important still, in the service Godward.

F.O.W. So that the praise of His glory would be in the ears of the whole creation.

G.R.C. There are not many men available to listen to it at the present time, but principalities and authorities in the heavenlies are taking account of the service of God proceeding in the assembly.

J.P.H. Does it emphasise the greatness of our portion, we have to subserve everything else to it? The service of God is what we live for?

G.R.C. So you can understand even at the present time how precious the assembly is to God, "which he has purchased with the blood of his own". I think the principalities in the heavenlies observe through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God as it functions under the headship of Christ. "The unsearchable riches of the Christ", of whom Solomon was a type, are available to the assembly as under His headship, and thus she is fully endowed in the service of God.

W.S.S. Would the expression "all-various wisdom of God" link with the thought of counsel in chapter 1?

G.R.C. Is not the wisdom seen in the way the assembly serves as under the headship of Christ? Christ is the true Solomon, He has unsearchable riches in the way of substance and in the way of wisdom; and, as the assembly functions under His headship, every feature of divine wisdom comes into display.

E.C.H. In the functioning of the assembly?

G.R.C. Yes. Is it not well to understand God's purpose in this connection? This chapter refers to His purpose relative to the present time; the fulfilment of purpose according to chapter 1 will be complete in the future, but chapter 3 refers to the purpose of God about the present moment. He has secured the assembly, "which he has purchased with the blood of his own", in view of a present answer to His thoughts, "according to the purpose of the ages which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord".

R.L. It says in the note that the word 'purchased' is really 'purchased to himself' (Acts 20: 28).

J.P.H. The note connects with the note on Hebrews 1, showing that what God has done is in view of what is for Himself now and eternally, the purchase of the assembly. That links with the last verse we read, what He secured

for Himself now and eternally, “to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”. It begins now and goes right on, is that right?

G.R.C. Quite so.

J.P.H. One would like to emphasise the greatness, the importance and the value of the service of praise—glory to God in the assembly.

A.McG. Does that bear on the remarks made in an earlier reading as to what God has set in the assembly for Himself?

G.R.C. And especially on the fact that He has *purchased* the assembly *for Himself*.

## THE LOVE OF DIVINE PERSONS

Address by MR. W. W. SMART

Romans 15: 30-33. Ephesians 5: 25-27; 3: 19.  
John 16: 26-27. Revelation 21: 1-4

Reference was made earlier today to the desirability of our being found in conditions proper to home—in homely, holy, heavenly conditions was the expression used—but to be found in such conditions, attractive to every heart, it is first essential that we should know love. Home could not be home were love not in holy activity and enjoyment.

In view of our touching now, in the Spirit, those conditions proper to home, I have read first concerning the love of the Spirit, then I would like to refer to the love of the Christ, and then to the love of the Father, all bearing upon us and serving us in view of our being at home in the presence of God Himself, the source of love eternal.

It seems right to remark that if we ever were to understand love, then the economy was a necessity; for being what we are we cannot comprehend love apart from it finding an outlet in suited relationships known to us, and so in grace transcending the Persons of the Godhead have assumed certain relationships in order that the love ever known to them should find holy expression in a way most attractive, and which is calculated to move and captivate every heart. Not that it is to be thought that love awaited the economy for the expression of itself, for indeed the words of the Lord Jesus spoken when here as to love would show otherwise as in the holy intimacy of the Father's love, which was His constant delight. You remember how He says, "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory", and then there is this word, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24). There is love in holy active expression

between the Persons of the Godhead, in a relationship which we cannot and never will comprehend, because what the Persons of the Godhead are for Themselves, and to Themselves, and with Themselves must ever lie outside of our range. Yet that love, in that setting beyond us, has come into the most attractive expression in the economy formed, and in which the Persons of the Godhead are seen in relationships so delightful to consider. It is noteworthy that in the Spirit's first reference to love He chooses to bring it forward in a relationship so delightful as it says, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest" (Gen. 22: 2); first the relationship is stressed, "thine only son", as providing an outlet for the love that was there, and in the second reference love is spoken of in the delicate relationship which obtains between a husband and his wife, as it says of Rebecca, "and she became his wife, and he loved her" (Gen. 24: 67). All this stresses the way that love has moved in view of its own expression, so that the Persons of the Godhead have assumed relationships, attractive and alluring to the heart, that love in all its fulness might outflow.

Love in all its blessedness involves the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so I begin with this reference to the love of the Spirit, and would say first of all that while I mean to speak of the love of the Spirit, and the love of the Christ, and the love of the Father, yet love is *one*, as God is *one*. It may shine in different settings and relationships, but love is *one*, and in the love of the Spirit I see a suggestion of the *sensitiveness* of love; in the love of the Christ I see a suggestion of the *exclusiveness* of love; and in the love of the Father I see a suggestion of the embracing, possessive character of love—"Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine" says one father—all serving to bring us into the holy blessedness of being nearer to the source of love in God Himself, as we have in Revelation 21.

But I come to this reference in Romans 15, where Paul in beseeching the brethren uses two levers, saying, "But I beseech you, brethren, *by* our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* the love of the Spirit". This is a matter of which we do not speak much; of the Spirit's service and support we freely speak, and rightly so; with His presence and power we are familiar, and that accompanies the idea of His

service. But this speaks of what the Spirit *is*; what the Spirit is personally; and the love of the Spirit is intended to be a known and proved matter by us. His service untiring, His support unwearying, all flow from what He is; and I believe this passage would (as our meetings have already done) impress us with the great personality of the Spirit. So that what is stressed here is not *only* the love of the Spirit, but what He is personally is seen in His love, in the love of the Spirit. Paul was very familiar with it, and in appealing to these saints in Rome he employs it as a lever in order “that ye strive together with me in prayers for me to God” (Rom. 15: 30). Think of the great stimulation this brings in. The love of the Spirit, how stimulating it is as well as sensitive!

I do not know of anything so sensitive as the love of the Spirit; the Spirit Himself is peculiarly sensitive. The exhortation is, “Do not *grieve* the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4: 30), stressing how sensitive He is; again, “quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5: 19), stressing how sensitive He is: and this passage in Romans delightfully engages us with the love of the Spirit—a holy, sensitive, stimulating love—which is to be known and which is to enter into our striving together in prayers—surely this is intended to make its own appeal! First, he says, “I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ”—His official name, setting out all that is proper to Christianity, but along with it “the love of the Spirit”; not an abstract matter, for it is finding expression in the saints, especially in those who are familiar with the Spirit, for love is learned through intimacy; the knowledge of love itself is conveyed in that holy way. If we are to be more familiar with the love of the Spirit, then we shall require to be more intimate with *the Spirit*.

The Spirit is so available, as we were referring this afternoon, to the word in Revelation 3, spoken there as “the seven Spirits of God”. How available, how accessible He is for every matter; He is to be the One to whom we are to daily turn, for the more we turn to the Spirit the more familiar we shall become with His love. This word speaks of “the love of the Spirit”, a holy, stimulating, supporting love, which is intended to impress us and help us to fill out our part in priestly service, for the love of the Spirit

is brought in here in view of "their striving together with him in prayers". That is to say, our weekly prayer-meetings, so essential, are to provide occasions for this stimulating sensitive love of the Spirit having way with us, so that we take up this priestly service in all the intensity that "striving" suggests. This lies within the range of the youngest, because it bears upon us all, and the youngest one should become familiar with the Spirit, and in some measure affected by the love of the Spirit.

Now I pass on to say a word or two regarding the love of the Christ, referred to in the passages in Ephesians to which we made reference. It says, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5: 25-7). I have referred to the love of the Christ as being peculiarly exclusive. That idea, I think, is conveyed in the word "Husbands, love your *own* wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly".

There is sensitiveness proper to love, and that, I think, is stressed in the love of the Spirit; but there is also an *exclusiveness* proper to love, and that, I think, is stressed in the love of the Christ. Not but that the love of the Christ finds outlet in other ways, for you remember how the Hebrew bondman could say, "I love my master, my wife, and my children" (Exod. 21: 5), all indicating how the love of the Christ might flow in other directions, and indeed does; but for the moment I am calling your attention to the exclusive character of it—"Husbands, love your own wives". The idea of exclusiveness runs through the whole matter; it runs through these verses which we have read together, as he goes on to say, "purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the assembly to himself", and the service in this great work of purifying is *His* own. It seems to me that the assembly is so precious to Christ that in one sense (and in the way we are now speaking) He will not allow another to serve her; so delightful is she to Him that He Himself will serve her.

Not but that the Spirit also serves the assembly, for

you will remember how in the type set out in the book of Esther, Hegai, keeper of the women, and typical of the Spirit, speedily gave Esther the things she needed for her purification, showing the alacrity with which the Spirit serves where there are these conditions which please Him. How he brings in what she needs, the six months with oil of myrrh, that there might be no spot, and who can bring in the concentrated sufferings of Christ (suggested in the *oil* of myrrh) better than the Spirit? And again the six months with spices—the holy fragrance of Christ—so needed, and so effective and applied that there should be no wrinkle, no trace of age, and who can bring in a presentation of Christ with that in view save the Spirit? But in this Scripture we are seeing the exclusive character of the love of the Christ in that He takes on the whole service Himself, because the assembly is peculiarly His own and He has found in her a suited object for His love—for His exclusive love. He virtually takes up the position of not allowing any other to serve her, so precious is she to Him, and while we know from other scriptures that others are used, yet He Himself is behind every service, bringing in this suitable word, as it says, “purifying it by the washing of water by the *word*, that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless”—He virtually takes on the service of rendering the assembly suited to Himself. This is love in its exclusive service. How attractive it is! How precious it makes to our hearts the Lover of the assembly, that He takes on this service so concentrated, prompted by a love that considers for its object and its object alone. How rightly He takes it on, so that the assembly, as the fruit of His own service, may be like Himself, because the Scripture goes on to say, “that he might present the assembly to himself glorious . . . that it might be holy and blameless” (Eph. 5: 27), as He Himself is. His service is entirely prompted by an exclusive love and has in view that the assembly should be altogether like Himself; it is *of* Himself, and *for* Himself, and soon it will be eternally *with* Himself, but His present service, as suggested in these Scriptures, is in view of the assembly being *like* Himself, without “spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things”. But then the love of the Christ

goes further than this. Here in chapter 5 it is serving in a holy, exclusive way, but when we come to Ephesians 3 the love of Christ is serving that we “may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. This is the great ultimate end which the love of the Christ has in view, and the choice way in which the economy is referred to in the latter part of this chapter is most attractive. It says, “I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named”, and we are named of the Father; then the matter of being “strengthened with power by his Spirit”—the Father’s Spirit; and “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”. Then by way of bringing in something additional, this peculiar love, the love of the Christ, known to the assembly in a holy, intimate way, is brought in to serve us in view of our being “filled even to all the fulness of God”. That, I would think, our being filled to all the fulness of God, involves all that has come out in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

We often remark to one another that we need the service of the Spirit throughout in the service of God, but we also need the service of the love of the Christ, known in the holy, intimate way we have referred to in Ephesians 5, and now serving us to arrive at this great and final end, “to all the fulness of God”. How the love of the Christ in its intimate bearing would support us as we thus move forward into all that has come out in the love of the Father, and in the love of the Son, and in the love of the Spirit; such is the love of the Christ.

Now I come to speak of the love of the Father, and with that in mind I read the passage in John 16, where it says, “for the Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me, and have believed that I came out from God”. We are now to consider the Father’s love; it is an embrative love; it extends to every family named of Him, not only in the heavens, but on the earth; every family will have its own distinctive impression of the Father’s love. But there is one outstanding family that will have an incomparable impression, and that is our portion, beloved brethren; we shall know the love of the Father eternally, and in a way and setting unknown by any other family that bears His name, for while the Father’s

love is embrative it is also *selective*. You will remember how it says of Israel, "And Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was son of his old age" (Gen. 37: 3)—there is the selective love of the Father shining out. It is not to be thought for one moment that Jacob did not love the other sons, for he did, but then there was that which was peculiarly lovable in Joseph which drew out the father's affections in a manner not known by the others. There is a sense, and I think the scriptures would warrant me saying so, in which the Father's love is drawn out by the presence of what is lovable in its object.

The love of God flows freely—a causeless love; but there are occasions with the Father's love when He looks for a cause, that it might find suited expression; the Father's love is selective, looking for and finding lovable features in which it finds peculiar delight. You remember the words of the Lord Jesus, where He says, "On this account the Father loves me, *because* I lay down my life that I may take it again" (John 10: 17); there He is in the consciousness of being peculiarly loved by the Father on account of some outstanding lovable feature. There is something peculiarly attractive about the selective character of the Father's love, ever finding holy delight in the presence of features which are so attractive to Himself. So we have this word in John 16, "for the Father himself has affection for you". Is there a cause? Is there a reason? Undoubtedly so; the Father's affections have been drawn out in this particularly selective way. What, then, is the reason? "*Because* ye have had affection for me." We see in this, that the more we love Christ the more lovable are we to the Father.

Now the Father is supreme in love's economy, and by reason of being supreme in love's economy it is fitting that He should secure the greatest response. The Father is not only content with us being near, but *nearer* to Him—in our place I cannot say *nearest*; the nearest place belongs to "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1: 18). What holy intercourse is there, love in all its secret intercourse holding sway. Love finding free, unhindered outflow between the Father and the Son, and that in the nearest place which belongs exclusively to "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the

Father". But by extension we have the bosom of Jesus; He is in the Father's bosom, a place peculiarly known and entered into by the only-begotten Son, and all that is in that bosom is conveyed to us mediatorially, as we are in the bosom of Jesus—a place open to every lover. I am not speaking of His breast—that is another matter. In John 13 it refers to the disciple whom He loved, "Now there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus, whom Jesus loved"; he was in the bosom of Jesus, in love's own setting, in love's own place. What holy tranquillity fills the heart that finds its place there; the bosom speaks of the receptive affections of Jesus, so choice, so blessed!

When it comes to a moral matter, he is not said to be *in* the bosom of Jesus, for moral matters are not for the bosom—the sphere of love's holy intercourse. When it is a matter of what is moral it is a question of being *on* His breast; the breast speaking of the supporting, sustaining affections of Jesus, as known to the one who is there; every moral matter is brought to its final issue, as we are familiar with the breast of Jesus, for there we learn the movements of the morsel, by which all is brought to light. Yet while His place is the nearest place, the Father, being supreme in love's economy, must have us in the *nearer* place. You will remember the words spoken concerning the sons of Joseph, "And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said to his father, They are my sons, whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, to me, that I may bless them. . . . And he brought them *nearer* to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them" (Gen. 48: 8–10). There is a peculiar restfulness in the Father's love; a holy calm fills the heart that dwells there. "And he brought them nearer to him"; this is to be a known matter; the love of the Spirit is to be a known matter; the love of the Christ is to be a known matter; but here we are now in the presence of the love of the Father, a love that insists on our being in the nearer place, "and he kissed them, and embraced them", and all this is serving to bring us even now in the Spirit's power to the source of love, God Himself, and I have the impression that we arrive at these eternal-home conditions by way of the love of the Spirit, the love of the Christ and the love of the Father.

Now I close my remarks with a reference to Revelation 21, where it says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." We are now coming to the source of all, to God Himself, in a setting so holy, so glorious. First attention is called to the holy city, new Jerusalem, which is the assembly coming into view in her eternal setting. See how she shines—the radiancy, the attractiveness and the glory which mark her, first, in her bridal setting, as it says, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." What beauty, what radiancy, what attractiveness mark her! What adornment bedecks her! This is femininity at its best—the assembly in a setting glorious. The service of the Spirit has had its effect—the exclusive service of Christ, prompted by His personal love, has had its effect—and now see how she shines, spotless and in pristine beauty—"as a bride adorned for her husband". What could be more captivating and alluring to our hearts than to view her thus.

Then it says, "I heard a loud voice out of the heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them." God is now shining in suited eternal dwelling conditions; dwelling in the assembly, for God will only dwell where Christ is enshrined, and here the assembly is brought forward in her eternal setting, with Christ enshrined in her affections, and in that scene and in that setting God is prepared to dwell, and dwell in holy nearness. This is not God in His essential Being; this is not God in absolute Deity; this is not God dwelling in unapproachable light; this is God dwelling in the assembly—the tabernacle of God with men, immediately near to man, so near as with tenderness divine he wipes away every tear from their eyes, and men immediately near to God, in holy, restful eternal conditions, as it says, "*holy and unblamable* before Him in love". God dwelling in a setting wholly suited to Himself, so blessedly near and known; served and worshipped for

ever; dwelling in the assembly, the residence of glory; God at home with men, and men at home with God. This is to be known *now* in the Spirit's power, the blessedness of being at home with God, known *now*, as the hymn says:

*“The Father, source of glory—  
The Son, the centre blest—  
The Spirit all pervading—  
The Fulness pleased, at rest!”*

As caught by the return flow of this mighty love which has its source in God, we can but worship and adore, and as thus affected in our spirits and in our souls by divine love we reverently say to God, “to Him be glory for ever”.

May the Lord bless the word.

## THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING

Address by MR. G. R. COWELL

Psalms 2: 6-8, 12; 45: 1-9, 13; 22: 1-3, 22; 48: 1-3, 8-10

I wish to say a word, dear brethren, as to God's Son and God's King, and what the assembly is to the King; and also to speak of *God* as King, and what the assembly is to God.

It is a great joy to speak of the King; the Psalmist might well say, "My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed [or, 'my occupation'] touching the king." The King is a wonderful occupation! The King, indeed, enraptures all our hearts as we come to know Him and apprehend His glories. He is the Beloved. Psalm 45 is headed "A song of the Beloved". David's name means 'beloved'; Solomon's other name (Jedidiah) means 'beloved of Jehovah'. God's idea of a King is that He rules in the affections of His people—He is the Beloved. Not that He is King over the assembly. If we think of an earthly king and queen, we do not think of the king as ruling over the queen; and yet no one appreciates the king as much as the queen. If the queen refers to *the king* you know whom she means; it is her husband, he is the king to her. That is how the church stands related to Christ: He is head over all things. He is truly God's King, but He is head over all things *to* the assembly. No company will ever have such an appreciation of the King as the assembly. The King is her Husband, and the fact that He is the King only enhances to her the wonder of His affection for her as Husband. It is wonderful to her to think that such a Person as the King needs her for the satisfaction of the affections of His heart, and also needs her as His consort in the glorious position which He occupies as King, and that He will not take up that position publicly until the queen is by His side. Now that is what is true as regards Christ

and the assembly. At the present time He has left other things to be united to the assembly, and not till the assembly is complete and in glory at His side will He take up all the vast interests in a public way which pertain to Him as head over all things. The assembly will then share with Him in the headship. Thus no company has such an appreciation of the King as the assembly, because, to use the figure, she is the queen; and who values the king, even in a human royal family, like the queen?

But the King is not only beloved to the assembly, He is beloved of God. God chose David, a man after His own heart, who would do all His will. How God loved David! He said, "I will make him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89: 27). So the scripture says, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul has found its delight" (Matt. 12: 18). Think of God expressing Himself like that! And then, "I will put my Spirit upon him"—that is the King. God says, as it were, 'I will anoint that Man because He is my Beloved, and My soul has found its delight in Him'. That is what the title 'the Christ' means. God has put His Spirit in its fulness upon one Man and one Man only. We share in the anointing, but the Spirit in its fulness is upon the Christ.

So Psalm 2 says, "I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness." The King in the Old Testament corresponds with "the Christ" in the New. He is the Anointed, God's beloved in whom His soul has found its delight, the Man after His own heart who will do all His will. God can trust Him fully and has put all power in His hands, assured that everything will be carried through according to His will. "The Christ" is an official title and relates to the highest office in the universe. We little realise (we shall see it soon!) the magnificence and splendour attaching to it; an office so great that, although it belongs to manhood, only a Person of the Godhead could fill it. So when Paul refers to the incarnation in Romans 9 he says, "of whom, as according to flesh, is *the Christ*, who is over all, God blessed for ever"; because no one who was not "over all, God blessed for ever" could ever sustain in manhood the glorious office of "the Christ". God says, "in whom my soul has found its

delight". The soul of the assembly also finds its delight in the Christ; our soul goes out to Him. We are espoused to one Man, there is no rival to Christ in the assembly.

But Psalm 2 goes on to say, "Thou art my Son; I this day have begotten thee", and the great truth of Christianity is that this blessed Person who is the Christ is God's Son. Only a Person in the relation of sonship could fill out this great position. All that God had in His mind in purpose as to man finds expression in the Christ. In Him we see manhood in its fulness and glory according to God. Paul speaks of the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God. There is God's full thought of Manhood, but it is expressed in One who is in the relationship of Son. Psalm 2 brings out the glories of Christ in a remarkable way, "I have anointed my king . . .", then, "thou art *my Son*; I this day have begotten thee", and then in the last verse there is a word to the kings of the earth: "Kiss *the Son . . .*", a title which especially brings before the soul His Deity. It is a remarkable opening to the Psalms. This blessed Person, who is the Son of God and the Christ of God, is *the Son* co-equal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." We are on the eve of the time when that word will go out to the kings of the earth, because the time is at hand when no earthly ruler will be allowed to exercise any authority except that which he derives from God's King. The kissing of the hand, as we know, is an acknowledgment of royalty; in this country when the king appoints his ministers they kiss his hand. That is the idea. No earthly authorities will be allowed to exercise power unless they are prepared to kiss the Son and receive their power from Him. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Now I wish to speak a word as to what the assembly is to Christ according to Psalm 45. The Psalm opens, "To the chief Musician, Upon Shoshannim", and the word "Shoshannim" means 'lilies'. This Psalm, which is a song of the Beloved, runs very closely along with the Song of Songs. The Song of Songs speaks of the Beloved, and the Beloved is the King. At the beginning of the Song the spouse says, "the king hath brought me into his chambers", and "while the king is at his table, my spikenard

sendeth forth its fragrance". The Song of Songs also refers to lilies; it says more than once that the Beloved feeds among the lilies. There is a reference to the spouse too; she says, "I am the narcissus of Sharon, a lily of the valleys"; and He says, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters". If the assembly is to be what she should be for Christ, the character suggested in the lily must mark her; and thus it must mark us all severally. The lily suggests purity, chastity and fragrance—that alone is worthy of the King. It is what He looks for in His spouse, and the Spirit is here that these conditions might be found with us. It is impossible to nature, but in sanctification of the Spirit the saints become lilies, marked by purity, chastity and fragrance for the Beloved; and as we are marked severally in that way, with what pleasure He can look upon the assembly and say, "as the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters", and, "thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse". In such conditions the praises are set free, the Lord has His portion and we have our portion too. "He feedeth among the lilies."

"My heart is welling forth with a good matter; I say what I have composed touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." I cannot go into the details of this Psalm, but I believe it provides abundant material for enlargement in our praises to the Lord Jesus because it views Him in so many settings: first in His moral excellencies and worth, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men"; secondly, in His military might and majesty, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, in thy majesty and thy splendour"; thirdly, on the throne and wielding the sceptre, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom", the assembly recognising the truth of His Deity and worshipping Him accordingly. Yet, as so frequently happens in scripture, His Deity is set alongside His manhood, as it says, "thou has loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions". It is *the Person* we worship. It is not true to say that we worship Him as God and not as man. There is to be no such analysis of the Person of Christ. Following this the Psalm

depicts the blessedness of being near to Him in the palace, in His own sphere of glory. You can understand where there are 'lily' conditions—purity, chastity and fragrance—how readily we shall move into the glorious surroundings of the King Himself! Ever occupied with His Person, we are led into His own glorious surroundings: "Myrrh and aloes, cassia, are all thy garments." How close we are to Him—the odour of His garments affecting us! "Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad." "Kings' daughters are among thine honourable women; upon thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir." We are with the King in this glorious setting, conscious of his satisfaction with the one who is on His right hand, a consort entirely worthy of Himself in the glorious surroundings of the palace. Not many are privileged to know a king in his palace, but this is our portion. "All glorious is the king's daughter within"—within the royal apartments; she is there, conscious of her perfect suitability to be there for the satisfaction of the King, her husband. What a blessed thing that is! What a privilege the assembly has thus to be for Christ!

Now I pass on to Psalm 22, which refers not so much to the assembly as *for* Christ, but as *with* Christ—that is, as moving with Him. The heading is, "Upon Aijeleth-Shahar", which means, 'the hind of the morning'. As we know what it is to be with the King in the royal apartments, and as reciprocal affections between Christ and the assembly are satisfied, we are free to move with Him. This again links with the Song of Songs, where the Beloved is referred to more than once as "a gazelle or a young hart". The spouse says, "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart" (2: 8). The point of the Song of Songs is, Is she capable of moving *with* Him? Except when her state is bad she is glad to receive Him and to be for Him in His house of wine. But is she free to move upwards with Him? Psalm 22 suggests the assembly in her perfect ability, as a vessel formed by the Spirit, to move with Christ. He is the gazelle or the young hart upon the mountains; she is the hind of the morning. So that if He moves she will not be left behind. She is well able to move

alongside her Beloved to whatever heights He may be pleased to lead her; she is marked by spiritual agility to tread in the high places. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet" (Hab. 3: 19), and the Song of Songs reaches this point as a climax. The last verse is spoken by the spouse; she says, "Haste, my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." That is what *she* says. Who could say that but 'the hind of the morning'? It is not that she is inviting Him to leave her—not at all; she is urging Him to move into the heights because she knows she is able to accompany Him. Not that He needs any urging; His affections and thoughts are ever in that direction. He says to the woman in John 20, who represents 'the hind of the morning', "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Was Mary dismayed? Not at all! She had no thought that that meant she would lose Him. The hind of the morning has the inner conviction that if He ascends she is well able to go with Him, in the Spirit's power; she will not lose Him. The Song of Songs deals with the reciprocal affections between Christ and the assembly; but it is to prepare us for what is beyond in the service of God; and the last verse shows that the spouse is ready, and not only ready, but she is urging Him, and that is very precious to Christ. He needs no urging, of course; but how precious to Him when the spouse comes to the point when she is urging Him, saying, "Haste, my beloved", as much as to say, It is time to move, it is time to move on into the heights.

If we are to be prepared to move into the heights it not only requires that we should understand reciprocal affections between Christ and the assembly, and thus be fully under the impulse of His love, but that we should have some appreciation of the depths into which He has been and thus have true wifely feelings in this matter. The Lord has been into the greatest depths that He may lead the praises of God in the greatest heights; that is why the hind of the morning is in the setting of Psalm 22. It is the sufferings of Christ presented, not from the standpoint of our salvation—although necessary for that—but from the standpoint of His God: what He suffered to lay the basis for the declaration of the name of His God and to secure the praises of His God. So that when we come to

this side of the truth as to moving with Him, we apprehend Him not only as the Christ but as the Son of God, and we are thoroughly with Him in all the movements of His heart Godward. John stresses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We must never separate these things; the Christ is the Son of God, and if He has His way as the Christ He will lead us to God, for He is the Son of God. Paul presents the truth in the reverse order, that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Christ. We need the truth in balance in our souls. Paul would say, that blessed Person, the Son of God, is the One in whom all the counsel of God as to man finds its fulfilment. He is the Christ, the centre of everything for God. Whereas when the Person of Christ was attacked, as He was at the latter part of the first century, John writes to enforce the truth that Jesus, the Christ, is the Son of God. This we must hold in the fullest possible way.

So we move with Him who is the Son of God. "I ascend," He says, "to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." It is one ascension. The words "I ascend to", or 'towards', govern the whole sentence. It is one act of ascension, but it covers two phases of the truth: "My Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God." "My Father and your Father" is the realm of privilege; it brings into view the Father's house and all the blessedness of our access to the Father in home conditions: "that where I am ye also may be". Who can think of what is more blessed than to know God in this intimate way in the economy, knowing His Father as our Father? But then, when you come to the other expression, "my God and your God", it brings in the *additional* idea of responsibility, and I hope you will not misunderstand what I am saying. I do not mean responsibility as children of Adam, but the moment you get the thought of "*God*" you have the idea of responsibility; the name *God* must imply responsibility—"my God and your God". As I say, I do not want anyone to misunderstand the way in which I am using the expression 'responsibility'; but what I would say is that the assembly of God is a responsible vessel, the most responsible vessel in the universe. Because it is the subject of divine work it will never fail in responsibility, it will fulfil every function

which has been allotted to it. When you think of the Father's house you are not thinking of responsibility; it is privilege. But "my God and your God" would bring to our minds the assembly of God and what is entrusted to that vessel; it will never break down. It is not responsibility in the sense that there is any possibility of breakdown; but think what God has entrusted to that vessel! It is the city of God, the temple of God, the tabernacle of God! It will never break down in any of these settings, but remains inviolate in its eternal greatness. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87: 3). I delight in the idea of a vessel in which responsibility as to the whole universe centres and which, through the power of the Spirit and the power of union with Christ, will never break down in responsibility. It will fulfil every function God has allotted to it, for it is the assembly in *Christ Jesus*. What a contemplation! All this is in mind as we think of "my God and your God". The assembly is the city of Christ's God.

Psalm 48 refers to God in His glorious greatness and to the assembly in its glorious character relative to God. Psalm 47: 5-6 says, "God is gone up amid shouting, Jehovah amid the sound of the trumpet. Sing psalms of God, sing psalms; sing psalms unto our king." Who is the King? *God*. We have spoken of Jesus as the King, but now we move on to God as King. "Sing psalms unto our King, sing psalms! for God is the King of all the earth; sing psalms with understanding." That is what we need in this part of the service: understanding as to how to praise *God*. So the next Psalm says, "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the hill of his holiness." Whose city? The city of God—*God is the great King*. You say, I thought Christ was the great King; *Christ is God*, dear brethren, but as Man He delivers up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father; as Man He is placed in subjection that God may be all in all. The fact that as Man the Son retains the place of subjection eternally in no wise militates against the fact that in His own Person He is *GOD*. There are plenty of scriptures to support what I am saying. The book of Revelation supports what I am saying; in the final view of the throne in Revelation, "he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I

make all things new" (21: 5). Who is the speaker? "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Who could be "the Alpha and the Omega"? That title implies what has come into expression; it is the Person of the Godhead in whom things have come into expression—He is the One speaking as representing God. We are not called upon always to distinguish the Persons, and when it is a question of God, as such, we must *never* separate. But if we do distinguish who the Speaker is, it must be Jesus. He is speaking as God and representing God. We must never lose sight of the truth of the Lord's Person. In the next chapter it says, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me." You say, That is a Man speaking; so it is. But He immediately says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." We must never forget that Jesus is now glorified along with the Father, with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was; all the glory proper to Deity attaches to Him. But, as I say, it is not for us to analyse or separate. We can distinguish, but we cannot separate Persons of the Deity; and the Lord Jesus finally surrenders the kingdom, as a Man, in order that God may be all in all. God is the King of the ages, and the assembly is the city of the great King, the city of God Himself.

"Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the hill of his holiness. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, *the city of the great king*." I would like to leave us with an impression, dear brethren, of the glory and the magnificence of the assembly as the city of the great King. The city is an inclusive thought, because it includes the house, the temple, the sanctuary; the river and the Tree of Life are there. Jerusalem of old included the house and the sanctuary. The city is the great inclusive idea, including all that is proper to the great King. What this Psalm stresses is the praise proper to the great King; but administration proper to the great King also proceeds from this city. So it says, "As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God: God doth establish it for ever. Selah. . . . According to *thy name*, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth." How much is involved in that, the name of God!—

the name by which we know Him, the name to which we have been baptised: "according to thy name"—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. But though thus known, He is still none the less Jehovah Elohim, the One who from eternity to eternity is GOD. So that the final word in Revelation is the Lord God (i.e. Jehovah Elohim) will shine upon them. Who is Jehovah Elohim? The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God from eternity and to eternity.

May the Lord help us in our apprehension of these great things; may He help us to appreciate Himself in His glory as God's King and as God's Son. May He help us in true assembly features to respond to Him. May we be so helped on that line that we are ready to move with Him, to move in high places, to enter the realm of privilege, "my Father and your Father", and to enter on this great realm of what I have spoken of (I do not wish to be misunderstood) as responsibility, what the assembly is as the city of the great King, where praises worthy of the great King never cease to be offered, and through which the light of the glory of God never ceases to be diffused to the whole universe.

## THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD

### READING (1)

Psalms 2: 1-12; 8: 4-6; 22: 1-3, 22; 24: 3, 8-10; 40: 6-8; 41: 13

G.R.C. The Psalms are suggested with the desire that we may be helped in the praises of God. It is proposed to take up a book in each of the five readings, considering the salient features of each, particularly having in mind the doxology at the end of each book. We are not thinking of the Psalms as applied to Israel, but rather seeking the Spirit's help in giving an application to them, as bearing on the praises of the assembly. I think all would agree that this is justifiable, because the assembly was the primary thought with God: and while scriptures such as the Psalms have a special bearing upon Israel, the Spirit of God ever had the assembly before Him when inditing scripture. The whole of scripture, thus, was written for our learning. We can read the Psalms, therefore, in the light of Paul's ministry and the place the assembly has in association with, and as united to, Christ; and if read in that way they are calculated, one feels, to expand our thoughts as to the praises of God. It has been noted by others that the Psalms begin with the blessedness of the man, that is man according to God, and bring out the blessedness of God, ending with the last five Psalms which constitute the great Hallel (i.e. praise) to God. The last Psalm is an ascription of praise to God in the greatness of His Being, as signified in the names of Jah and El, so that the Psalms, especially as viewed in Christian light, lead up to a remarkable climax. God, as God, is praised in the greatness of His Being, by creatures who have become intelligent as to His nature and attributes, by the way in which He has come out in declaration and revelation. Such can render to Him a worthy note of praise.

I think the first book of Psalms particularly has in mind the purpose of God and presents God to us in relation to

His purpose. The purpose of God takes our minds back to a past eternity and in its fulfilment leads our minds on to the eternity to come, and so we can understand the doxology at the end, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! Amen and Amen." But then, with that in mind, the book dwells much on Christ, as the Man of God's purpose. When it speaks of His moral features it often indicates that there will be others like Him. The first Psalm, while applying primarily to Christ, has a more general application, for it refers to the assembly of the righteous. Similarly, the first part of Psalm 24 says, "Who shall ascend into the mount of Jehovah? and who shall stand in his holy place?" And goes on to say, "This is the generation of them that seek him." So that where there are moral descriptions, while Christ is primarily in mind, it makes way for the generation of Jesus Christ. But when you come to the glories of the Christ in this book, they are unique to Him—no one can share them with Him. The second Psalm brings out basic glories upon which the whole divine plan, as one might say, rests. He is God's anointed—God's Christ; He is God's Son, and He is also called *the* Son. It is a remarkable thing that at the opening of the Psalms there should be such a full setting out of the glories of Christ. Psalm 8 indicates that these glories are no longer limited to Israel and so presents the Son of man in universal dominion. Psalm 22 refers to His sufferings in order to secure the purpose of God. Psalm 24 brings out, without equivocation, who He is in His Person. The Man who has gone in is none other than Jehovah of hosts. And then Psalm 40, "In the roll of the book it is written of me", refers to the One in whom the purpose of God centres. I thought these points might engage us, particularly Psalm 2, as being basic, and then Psalm 22, where we might consider specially the declaration of God's name; and then Psalm 40.

N.F.A. Does the first book link up definitely with Ephesians in the New Testament, would you say, as unfolding to us the glory of Christ?

G.R.C. There is a very definite link with Ephesians, and with Paul's and John's ministry generally. Psalm 2 brings out two glorious features of Christ's manhood.

The first thing is, "I have anointed my king". That is, God has His Christ; and if the purpose of God was ever to be carried through God *must* have His Christ. He must have the Man whom He could anoint, the Man capable of carrying all through for God. Then there is the relationship in which He stands as Man, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." These two glories are greatly developed by both Paul and John. Paul commences his ministry by preaching in the synagogues "Jesus that *he* is the Son of God" (Acts 9: 20), and he quotes in Acts 13: 33 from this very passage, "Thou art my son." Following the preaching in Acts 9, it says he confounded the Jews, proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. These are the great pillars of Paul's ministry, that Jesus is the Son of God and that Jesus is the Christ. Paul's gospel centres in the Son of God, and his ministry of the assembly centres in the Christ. Ephesians is full of the glory of the Christ. Similarly they are the two great features of John's ministry. He writes that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. His emphasis is more on the Son of God.

W.J.S. Do you think we have been in danger of thinking of the Psalms too much on the individual line? Even in the first Psalm the generation is suggested, the assembly of the righteous. And it is remarkable that at the end of Luke He can open up the Psalms, and afterwards they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God?

G.R.C. The final thing the Lord brings in is the Psalms. "These things are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all that is written concerning me in the law of Moses and prophets and Psalms, must be fulfilled." And then He says, "Thus it is written and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer." He brings in that title, *the Christ*.

A.T.G. Could you say a word as to your reference to verse 12, "Kiss the Son", and then the further reference to Paul's ministry as to the Son of God? The Lord says in the gospels that no one knows the Son, but Paul says that we are to arrive at the full knowledge of the Son of God.

G.R.C. It seems to me remarkable that so much is comprised prophetically in the second Psalm. First "I

have anointed my king"; that is, God has His Christ. His Christ is not only His King, but He is His Priest, for it says, "upon Zion, *the hill of my holiness*". Indeed, if God secures His King, He secures His Priest, His Prophet and His Preacher. All those are included in the idea of King according to God. "I the Preacher was King in Jerusalem." So that, in His Anointed, His Christ, He has the Man who can carry into effect everything that is in the mind of God. The last book of Psalms shows, among other things, that He is not only the Anointed but also the Ark of God's strength (Ps. 132). But the first book stresses that God has secured His Anointed, the Man who will carry everything through, and this involves finding a place—indeed at the centre of the universe—for Jehovah and the Ark of His strength. But the first thing is that God has secured His Christ. Then there is the relationship in which He stands, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee", and we are to arrive at the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man. We are to grow up to Him in all things who is the Head. But then behind all that is the truth of His Person, and the Psalm ends with "Kiss the Son", a title which, while attaching to Him only in manhood, yet lays great stress on His Deity. Those who uttered these things in Old Testament times, as Peter says, did not understand the implication of what they were saying, but here is the word to the kings of the earth, "Kiss *the Son*"; and it seems to me that it is a remarkable allusion to His Deity. We need, of course, to see, to begin with, that even the fact that He is God's Anointed and God's Son implies Deity. J.N.D. says that the Lord Jesus has taken places and positions outside of Godhead which no one but a Person of the Godhead could fill, and we have to take that into account. No one but a Person of the Godhead could ever be God's Christ. And so immediately Paul says, "of whom, as according to flesh, is the Christ", he adds, "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen". No less a Person could ever fill out the position of the Christ. Similarly, no one but a Person of the Godhead could fill out the relationship implied in the expression, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." But when the title "*the Son*" is used I think there is *special* stress on His Deity.

W.S.S. Would you say that in the second Psalm God introduces a Man who, at the same time, is divine, by means of whom He is going to fill the universe with praise, as in the last Psalm?

G.R.C. Exactly. Here is the Man who is going to do it. It brings out His *official* glory, the Christ, and His *personal* glory in manhood, the only-begotten Son. Then there is this reference to *the* Son, which especially stresses *Deity*, I believe.

W.S.S. I think it is exceedingly beautiful. I am always very thankful when I hear the Psalms taken up. J.N.D. said that there is more of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms than any other part of scripture. I suppose the praises which will ascend to God in their fulness depend upon the apprehension of the way in which Christ is presented to us, particularly, perhaps, in Psalm 2.

G.R.C. So that it is good to have Christ before us in the way He is presented. And let us keep in mind that this word is about to go out to the kings of the earth, "Kiss the Son."

S.H. "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me." Do you understand that it is the Christ, the Anointed, that is speaking there, and would it confirm to us that He is the Alpha and Omega? The decree seems to be connected with His Deity.

G.R.C. It was Jehovah's decree, I suppose; but then the great mystery is that this Person Himself is no less than Jehovah, as we see in Psalm 24. The question is raised, "Who is this king of glory?" Who is this glorious Man who has gone through and established the whole purpose of God? "Jehovah of hosts, he is the king of glory."

G.H.S.P. Would the first two chapters of Hebrews confirm what you are saying: the glory of the Son in chapter 1, in the setting of the revelation of God, and then, in chapter 2, many sons being brought to glory? The response is to be equal to the revelation because they are both in Christ. Those chapters are full of quotations from the Psalms.

G.R.C. Very good. Chapter 1 stresses His Deity, but in chapter 2 we are associated with Him. But very soon the kings of the earth are to hear this command, "Kiss the Son." No one will hold office in that day unless he

acknowledges the royalty and Deity of this Person. The kissing of the hand is customary when a person receives office at the hands of a monarch, and the time is very near when no one will hold office in heaven or on earth unless he receives it from Him.

Rem. And it will be done, it will be done!

C.E.J. Does Ephesians 1: 9-10 confirm what you are saying as to the purpose of God, "which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ"?

G.R.C. Very much so. In that day every office-holder in heaven and on earth will hold office only on condition that he kisses the Son. All things are to be headed up in the Christ, the Anointed.

W.S.S. How does this apply at the present time, because it must work out in the assembly in a fuller way, must it not? All must flow from the heart being attached to the Son?

G.R.C. I think so. The greatness of the Person of Christ is cherished in the affections of the assembly, for He is head over all things to the assembly, which is His body; He is that to us *now*. He does not appear to be that to men on earth at the moment; but to the assembly He is ever that. How we love Him in His glory as He is presented in this Psalm!

C.J.H.D. Does God's wisdom enter peculiarly into this matter, along with His purpose, for the word used in Psalm 2: 6 for anointed, according to the note, is the same word that is used in Proverbs 8, where it is said that wisdom was set up from eternity, from the beginning of God's ways. Though this is said of Christ in manhood, the wisdom that purposed it goes back to the past eternity, does it not?

G.R.C. Very good. All things were created by Him and for Him, were they not? Everything was according to plan from the very outset, having in view that the Christ would fill all.

J.F.P. So that the kiss of allegiance makes way for the outshining of the glory of God in the world to come, in keeping with His purpose?

G.R.C. Quite so, and subjection to the Son at the present time makes way for the service of God in the assembly.

J.F.P. I am sure that is most important, the bearing of it on the service of God at the present time, and the outshining of God in testimony, too.

G.R.C. We should cherish the mystery of His will, to head up all things in the Christ and have a sense of the imminence of it. But then that would all help in the present service of God, and I think for that we need to move on to Psalm 22. Psalm 8 enforces the truth that the titles of Psalm 2 are not limited to Israel. The Christ has universal dominion as the Son of man, and the assembly is linked with Him in it, as we see in Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23, where Psalm 8 is quoted; God has put all things under His feet and given Him to be head over all things to the assembly which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. That is the downward aspect of His headship, as we might say. Adam is the type and the woman associated with him. The light of God shines through the divinely-appointed head to the whole creation. Psalm 22 has in view what is upward. It is a question of what is flowing back to God, beginning in the assembly, as we should say, in verse 22, but becoming universal, "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn unto Jehovah . . . for the kingdom is Jehovah's." I think we need to take account of the two aspects of Christ's headship: one from God downwards, as typified in Adam, and the other, gathering up the response of the universe Godward as typified in David and Solomon. These are the two great activities of Christ in headship—to make available to the whole creation the outshining of the blessed God, and then to gather up the response of the universe to His God.

W.J.S. And we are coming into the gain of that at the present moment? The service begins to take shape in Psalm 8, does it not?

G.R.C. Very good. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established praise because of thine adversaries, to still the enemy and the avenger." It is a Gittith Psalm, a Psalm of pressure. The pressure lies in the fact that both the external and the internal enemies are there, as the note indicates. Both are present today, but in the midst of the pressure praise is perfected out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

W.J.S. And the Lord quotes that very near to the supreme moment of His suffering and pressure, does He not?

G.R.C. He does. He was approaching Gethsemane. The word is cognate with Gittith. To Him it meant pressure to the fullest measure. Psalm 22 indicates the depths of pressure into which Jesus went.

E.C.L. Would you say a word as to the bearing of death on what is due to God? According to Psalm 8 He was made a little inferior to angels, and Hebrews 2: 9 adds, "on account of the suffering of death". Psalm 22 indicates what death meant to Him. Does the death of Christ stand between the two eternities, as it were?

G.R.C. That is very touching. We have spoken of "from eternity to eternity". You are thinking that the cross stands in between?

E.C.L. How much God is going to get out of the worst enemy of mankind in that way.

G.R.C. Has it not brought out the marvellous devotedness of the Christ, the Son of God, that He should have gone into such depths for the sake of His God? Do we not need to remember that Psalm 22 refers to the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His God? We know that they were necessary on our account, but they are viewed there as endured for the sake of His God, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This glorious Man could say "My God" in a way that no one else could ever say it. He said "My God" as knowing God in the Absolute, and it was that very knowledge which meant such intense suffering for Him. He was going to face the sin question in the light of God known to Him in the Absolute.

E.C.L. Quite so. How much suffering it meant in order that the glory of God might be maintained to the full. Yet praise could be secured only on that basis.

G.R.C. And so what is before Him is, "thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel". God is said to dwell in other circumstances. He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; He also dwells among His people in grace in the wilderness (2 Cor. 6: 16); but there is something very touching about this, "Thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel". If He is to dwell with the creature surely this is the most delightful

setting—to dwell amid the praises of the Israel of God. Because of what He is—God is love—the desire to dwell with intelligent, responsive creatures was such that, though never ceasing to dwell in light unapproachable, He moved out into the realm of declaration and revelation. And so in this Psalm, so full of the Lord’s sufferings, He says, “I will declare thy name”—a most important matter connected with the purpose of God. The Psalm contains these two great themes: the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His God, and coupled with it, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.”

W.McK. Are our minds to be impressed with the wonder and mystery of the Incarnation as that which is the basis of everything for God for time and eternity? Psalm 2 brings in the Incarnation, and then in Psalm 22 He says, “I am a worm, and no man”. How far He was prepared to go!

G.R.C. I think what you say about the Incarnation is most important. “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” would refer to that; and thus God secured His Christ. God’s Son is His Anointed.

W.J.S. Are you linking up Psalm 22, verse 3, with verse 22? Does Israel suggest a princely setting and the Lord Jesus, as prophetically speaking here, praises in the midst of a princely company?

G.R.C. I think so. We would have to link verse 3 with the Israel of God—the assembly.

G.W.B. Is that why you asked for the title of Psalm 22 to be read?

G.R.C. I think the title is a reference prophetically to the assembly, “To the Chief Musician, upon Ajeleth-Shahar”, which means ‘the hind of the morning’.

W.S.S. Were you going to say something more about the declaration of the name?

J.J.T. Was not the Lord in haste to make known that name “from the horns of the buffaloes”?

G.R.C. “From the horns of the buffaloes hast thou answered me. I will declare thy name.” Do you not think that God Himself also was waiting for this moment?

J.J.T. Does it link with “my God and your God”?

G.R.C. I think so, but I wonder whether we ought to begin with Matthew 28: 19 in thinking of “I will declare

thy name". I am enquiring, as in all things, for help; but Matthew is a gospel where the Lord Jesus quotes from this Psalm, saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and the depth of His sufferings is stressed. Also it is the assembly gospel. The assembly in Matthew 16 is the vessel of praise. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. Hades is the place of silence (see Isa. 38: 18), but the assembly's praises can never be silenced as the praises of Zion have been. Hades' gates can never succeed in causing assembly praise to cease.

A.B. Referring to Matthew's gospel, would there be a foundation in holiness established in the death of Christ, so that God could answer Christ from the horns of the buffaloes? God is glorified in Christ, and then God answers Him, bringing Him out of death.

G.R.C. I think so. Therefore I wonder whether "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" would refer, in the first instance, to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 28: 19. The Lord Jesus calls the disciples His brethren in Matthew 28: 10.

W.S.S. I had that in mind in asking the question. I feel what you are saying to us is going to help us greatly in the setting of this Psalm where the purposes and counsels of God are being secured. You could not think of a partial declaration, could you?

G.R.C. No. And so one would not shut out John 20: 17 at all, which brings out so fully our association with Christ. In fact John 1: 18 goes further than Psalm 22: 22 in a way, because there it is declaring *God*, not simply declaring His name. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared [him]." And the word 'declare' there has greater force, I think, than the word in Psalm 22. It is bringing out all that is to be known of God. But the Lord says here, "I will declare *thy name*", so I wondered whether we ought to make room for Matthew 28: 19.

A.B. Does it involve an answer in praise to this wonderful declaration, involving all three Persons of the God-head?

G.R.C. I think we ought to consider that. The Lord says, in spirit, "I will declare thy name", and at the end of Matthew He says, "Baptising them to the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". That is not God as dwelling in unapproachable light, but as having come out in this most remarkable way.

H.A.H. Does it link with the introduction of the Psalm, "My God, my God"?

G.R.C. I think we ought to keep in our minds that it is the sufferings of Christ for His God and the declaring of the name of His God. The Father is involved in the name, but it is the name of His God. In Matthew He says, "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

E.A.E. Would it link with Psalm 48, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise"? That would be the declaration of the name as we now have it—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—so that the praise would flow accordingly?

G.R.C. I would think that, but am enquiring for help.

A.A.B. Would we carry in our minds in the spirit of worship the greatness of the mediatorial position the Lord Jesus has taken? I am thinking of Psalm 22 and how He speaks in it, in the position of manhood, the word "My God", involving the reality of His manhood.

G.R.C. It is the reality of His manhood, and yet He is the Man who is Jehovah's fellow, as the prophet says in connection with the sword awakening against Him. He was truly Man, a perfect Man, considering for His God, and going into the depths for His God, and yet they were depths that no one but a Person of the Godhead could ever have gone into. Is that so?

A.A.B. Yes. I would like to refer to Psalm 2 again. "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us!" Is the bond between Jehovah and His Anointed seen in John's Gospel?

G.R.C. You are thinking that Jehovah and His Anointed are really the Father and the Son? It is John who says, "He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life"; and again, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him should have life eternal.

H.A.H. Do you think the working out of what was in the heart of the Lord in Psalm 22 is seen throughout the books of the Psalms?

G.R.C. I would. I think what Mr. L. said about the Psalm standing between the two eternities is most

interesting. Everything worked to this and from this. The two things: Christ going into the depths for His God, which was necessary to bring out what His God is in His nature and moral attributes, and then the declaring the name of His God. The name of Matthew 28 is a name of love and grace, conveying the way God has come out in order to effect His purpose. The operations of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit throughout this period are operations of love and grace.

R.S.W. Is it in relation to moral questions in Matthew?

G.R.C. If it were not for the operations of the Father and the Son and the Spirit none of us would ever face the moral question. I do not think that name in itself involves the moral question; but if men were to come into the gain of God's purpose the moral question had to be faced. Only the operations in grace of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have ever succeeded in bringing persons to face the moral question.

W.S.S. There is a note in Matthew's gospel in regard to the word "Eis". "Baptised to [eis] the name." It directs the mind to the great end in view.

S.H. You spoke of the blessedness of God earlier. Are you linking the declaring of the name with the blessedness of God made known to us?

G.R.C. I am. And I wonder whether we have apprehended sufficiently that *there is only one Declarer of God, and only one Declarer of God's Name*. What do you say to that?

S.H. We can see it according to Scripture.

G.R.C. Have we been too prone to search apostolic doctrine to understand the declaration of God? I can see that the apostles' doctrine is based on it and confirms it, but no apostle could say he declared God's name. Paul was a minister of the gospel to bring us into the gain of the declaration, and he was the minister of the assembly to bring about response to it, but he never says he was the declarer of God's name. Where must we go if we want to learn about God? Who must we go to?

M.H.T. Do you distinguish between the declaration of the name of God and the proclamation of the name of Jehovah to Moses in Exodus 34? Jehovah's name is said

to be proclaimed, "Jehovah, Jehovah God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty."

G.R.C. Jehovah was, and is, His name; but the disclosure of that name is not said to be a declaration. While He was known to Israel as Jehovah, He dwelt in thick darkness. That name implied His faithfulness, yet Moses did not see His face, only His back parts. So that God had not come out. As far as men were concerned, He dwelt in thick darkness, although in His own Being He dwells in light unapproachable. But now He *has* come out in the fullest possible way in which He can be known to the creature. And so the Lord has declared His name, according to Matthew, if what we are saying is right; but John goes further in saying "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* has declared [*him*]" ; this seems to me to go further than the declaring of the name. All that can be known of God has come out.

A.A.B. The pronoun "he" is emphatic. Does that support what you say as to there being only one Declarer?

G.R.C. Very good.

E.C.L. Is it also to be noted that it includes what is seen? "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared." Is it what has been set out personally, not only what has been spoken about of God in testimony?

G.R.C. I think so. So that while the name is the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, when you go to John's gospel the Lord brings out very clearly who the Father is and what He does. He does this to some extent in Matthew, but not in so full a way as in John. He also brings out clearly the truth of His own Person in John, and also the Personality of the Holy Spirit, and the bearing of these truths upon each other. And then, as you say, He says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father", and "If ye had known me ye would have known also my Father". The Father was dwelling in Him. John the Baptist also saw the Spirit descending as a dove and it abode upon Him. The fulness was there in Christ. Is that right?

E.C.L. Yes. It was different from a proclamation.

G.R.C. I wonder whether (I speak suggestively) we have paid enough attention to the fact that there is only one Declarer of God and of His name. It is what *He* has brought out that constitutes the declaration. Have we been inclined to search apostolic doctrine in order to get clear as to the Godhead, instead of giving due attention to what the Lord Jesus Himself has said and expressed? Apostolic doctrine, of course, helps.

H.W. Would you look upon the whole of John's gospel as being, in a sense, the amplification of the name in Matthew 28: 19? The whole of John brings before us the activities of each of the Divine Persons, and, whilst he does not refer to the formula of Matthew 28, the truth is given to us in a living kind of way?

G.R.C. That is what I had in mind. As to our coming into the fulness of the Christian's place in association and union with Christ, He says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

H.W. John's gospel having come in so much later than Matthew, the saints have this wonderful unfolding of the formula opened up in a living and spiritual kind of way.

G.R.C. Very good.

C.J.H.D. Is the 'hind of the morning' to be found spiritually in John 20 where the Lord says, "Woman"? It says at the beginning of that chapter, "Mary comes in early morn to the tomb". She came into the light of the morning in regard of the Man?

G.R.C. Just so. Clearly Mary had the features of the hind of the morning, and those are features the Lord looks for in His assembly. And it shows that the truth of union, the truth of the assembly's relations with Christ, must underlie the spiritual energy and alacrity that is needed to enter on to the highest levels of praise to God, in keeping with the Lord's words, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

M.H.T. Do we see not only the agility of the hind in Mary of Magdala but also in what is said of Naphtali, "A hind let loose, he giveth goodly words"? No more goodly words were ever entrusted to a messenger than those that the Lord entrusted to Mary.

G.R.C. Very good.

In Psalm 40 it says, "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: ears hast thou prepared me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not demanded; then said I, Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me—to do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight." Christ is the One in whom the purpose of God centres, so that in the roll of the book it is written of *Him*. This completes our contemplation, in this reading, of the glories of His Person, all having in view that He should become our Centre and that there should be a resulting note of praise, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity to eternity! Amen, and Amen".

## READING (2)

Psalms 42: 1-2; 45: 1, 6-9; 48: 1, 2, 8-10;  
68: 17, 18, 24, 32-35; 69: 1, 2, 9; 72: 18-20

G.R.C. It will be seen in the passages that we have read to what a large extent God, as such, is the theme of this second book; not now so much as relative to His purpose but as the One known to the saints in the way He has effectuated His purpose, both here in testimony and soon in the day of display. So the ascription of praise is, "Blessed be *Jehovah Elohim*, the God of Israel", that name Jehovah Elohim standing related particularly to His purpose as to man, "who alone doeth wondrous things!" It is a question of what He *does*. "And blessed be his glorious name for ever! and let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen, and Amen." The soul is looking on to the day of display, but blessing God as knowing Him already as the One who alone doeth wondrous things. That is, the soul understands what God has already effected in a testimonial way. The assembly is already here responsive to Christ in the light of what He is to her and she to Him, according to Psalm 45; and responsive to God in the light of what she is as the city of God according to Psalm 48. The assembly is already here and

functioning. Psalm 68 brings out the victorious service of Christ as the One who has ascended, but what is it but that He also descended, according to Psalm 69. He ascends in Psalm 68, but He is the One who also descended in Psalm 69 to bring all this to pass. And so the book ends with this note of praise and worship to Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, "Who alone doeth wondrous things", in the appreciation of His glorious Name, not now simply as a declaration, but as understanding the operations of God, what He has effected. And then one might just add that the book begins with the soul panting after God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." The Father has sought us in grace; the Son, too, the Lord Jesus, has sought us; and the Spirit has operated; but where a soul is divinely affected it pants after *God*. Nothing will satisfy the soul of man, as wrought upon by the Spirit, except God Himself. "When shall I come and appear before God?" And this book shows how these pantings are satisfied, and therefore closes with "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended". Every longing is stilled, every longing met by the One who alone doeth wondrous things. He has so wrought that we know what it is to appear before God in the city of our God, the city of the great King. But I think the opening of the book confirms from our side what has been before us so much, that God is the ultimate. God is the ultimate in worship, but He is also the ultimate in the soul's longings. The soul who has not had the experience of appearing before God in holy splendour, suitable to Him in His majesty and greatness as God, has never tasted yet complete soul-satisfaction.

J.F.G. Would this be the outcome of understanding how God has moved according to His purpose and counsel, the soul coming into the gain of that?

G.R.C. That is what I thought. The first book indicates the purpose of God and the Man of His purpose, but in this book it is the God who effects His purpose, who alone doeth wondrous things, so that the assembly comes to light, we might say, in a substantial way in Psalms 45 and 48, firstly as the queen, standing in relation to Christ, and secondly as the city of the great King, standing related to God.

A.M. Does this Psalm represent a state of soul pleasing to God over against the assumption of Korah?

G.R.C. It does. The sons of Korah figure much in this book. They refer to the saints as vessels of mercy. God has been pleased to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared for glory, us, whom He has also called. Sovereign mercy is the basis of our relations with God as God. The sense of that in the soul underlies the experiences of this book.

G.W.B. Is your thought that these longings of the soul find their answer in the assembly?

G.R.C. Yes. "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Where can we appear before God, thoroughly in keeping with all that He is but in the assembly?

W.S.S. Would Psalm 43 help? Verse 3 says, "Send out thy light and thy truth: they shall lead me, they shall bring me to thy holy mount, and unto thy habitations. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto the God of the gladness of my joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God."

G.R.C. That is very beautiful.

W.McK. Does Romans work out the pantings of the soul after God, and do the doxologies indicate the way that the soul reaches God?

G.R.C. That is very good. God is the great theme of Romans, just as God is the great theme of Ephesians. Paul's ministry shows the way we may come and appear before God. Paul experienced it, perhaps, as no other man has done, and his doxologies indicate his appreciation of the God before whom he appeared.

J.F.P. I was thinking of the deep sense of mercy Paul had according to 1 Timothy 1: 13, and the satisfied longings of his soul rising up in the great ascription of praise and worship to God in verse 17.

G.R.C. 1 Timothy deals with the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God, and, as you say, Paul says, "I received mercy", and within a few verses he is saying, "to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages.. Amen".

F.J.D. Would you say what is in mind in the living God?

G.R.C. I suppose it is in contrast to the deadness of idolatry and of Judaism. It is a most attractive expression. Jesus is the Son of the living God—we are called sons of the living God (Rom. 9: 26), and the assembly is the assembly of the living God.

W.J.S. The Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God.

A.B. Would the praise of God be enriched by experience with God? The Psalmist says, "God my rock", then "God of my strength" and "the God of the gladness of my joy".

G.R.C. It would. The third book especially deals with the side of experience, as we may see in our next reading. It enriches the response to God. There must be experience with God.

W.J.S. I believe the earliest reference to God in this way is in Joshua 3: 10. "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is in your midst." It is in connection with the Ark going into the Jordan.

R.F.D. Would "from eternity to eternity" be a suggestion as to the living God? The One that abides.

G.R.C. Yes. And does it not suggest living affections? The living God could only be satisfied with a world of life, a world of living response.

A.B. Does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit have any bearing on soul thirst after God? The Lord met it in John 4, going on to the thought of "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth".

G.R.C. That is very good. The thirst of the human soul can only be met in God Himself, and that is met, in this dispensation, by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

W.C.P. Do you think there is a link with that in the welling forth in Psalm 45? Does that suppose that the soul has the gain of the Spirit?

G.R.C. I think it does. It is a living touch. As to Psalm 45, it is a great thing to take account of what is actually effected and existing here in the scene of testimony, and soon to be displayed. The God who alone doeth wondrous things has operated in such a manner that the assembly is here. The heading of the Psalm is "Upon

Shoshannim", which means 'lilies'. It refers to the purity, chastity and fragrance of those that form the assembly. It is a vessel composed of such.

W.J.S. In John 4 there was a soul panting, and what a testimony she was able to render as having her thirst satisfied: "Come see a Man."

G.R.C. I think the first element of satisfaction is to see that Man, the Man of the Psalm 45. "Is not this the Christ?" We are then on the way to having every thirst of our souls met. In the first instance we need the Man, and to understand our relationship with the Man, through whom alone we can come and appear before God.

C.J.H.D. The Man really is the answer to that enquiry in Joshua. Joshua goes on to say, "Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth goes before you." Is not that the proof of the living God being in the midst, and might it not be linked with Ephesians 5, "Wake up thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee"? Is the Christ, as apprehended according to Psalm 45 in His glorious shining, the answer to the deadness around us?

G.R.C. Very good. The shining of the Christ is the true Christian light, is it not?

J.J.T. Is one of the wondrous things that God does in Psalm 45 that He anoints the Lord with the oil of gladness above His companions?

G.R.C. He is singled out because of who He is—He is God: "Thy throne O God is for ever and ever", but then He is singled out, too, in His perfect and glorious manhood, as anointed by God. "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee." It shows how the Deity and manhood of Christ are blended in scripture, and the need for flexibility of mind, in the power of the Spirit, to apprehend the truth of His Person. On the one hand He is God, and, as Man enthroned, is saluted as God; yet, immediately after, He is referred to as the Man anointed by His God on account of moral qualifications.

E.C.L. Do you think we have to appreciate Christ as Man to understand the greatness of God? I was thinking of the way the Lord used the expression "My God". The more we appreciate the Man, the more wonderful His God must be; and His God is our God.

G.R.C. Quite so. Much depends upon our apprehension of *the Christ*, the Man of God's purpose. Christianity takes its name from that title, and Christians themselves take their name from it. It has given character to Christianity in its testimonial setting. The church's links with Him stand related to it, for the union of the church is with Christ. It shows the importance of understanding the official greatness of Christ—*the Man*.

H.A.H. Would this be the normal way of having part in the service of God, from satisfied hearts welling forth with a good matter?

G.R.C. Yes, and the first thing is hearts satisfied and welling forth because of their occupation touching the King. The King here is Christ.

W.S.S. In that connection would you say a word on the last clause of the heading, "A Song of the Beloved"? The question would be as to Christ being the Beloved of our hearts, would it?

G.R.C. It is really the language of the assembly, is it not?

W.S.S. That is what I was thinking, but then it must be the language of each heart individually?

G.R.C. It must be. The King is also the Beloved in the Song of Songs. It is because *the King* is the Beloved that He has such sway over the people and can hold them all for God.

W.S.S. I was thinking, too, that it brings us into communion with the Father in regard to the Son.

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. He says, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul has found its delight. *I will put my spirit upon him.*" That is the Christ, is it not? The Father's soul finds its delight in Him and our souls find their delight in Him. That gives us a 'lily' character. As the saints are marked by the character of lilies the assembly as the chaste virgin comes into view, I think. Lilies suggest chastity.

W.H.K. Are you thinking of this Psalm in connection with our service on the Lord's Day morning; the entrance into and enjoyment of union helping us to appear before God rightly, gloriously?

G.R.C. Exactly. It prepares for Psalm 48.

A.B. Would it bring in the greatness of the assembly as

the vessel in which the various glories of Christ are given expression to in praise?

G.R.C. The varied glories brought out here afford material for expansion in the power of the Spirit in our service of praise to Christ. What He is in His moral perfection, what He is in His military prowess, what He is as on the throne and as wielding the sceptre, what He is as anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions, and then what He is in the palace, in the inner place, are all features of glory which stimulate praise.

H.W.S. What is the thought of 'instruction' in connection with this?

G.R.C. Does it not afford instruction as to the response in praise of the assembly to Christ?

E.C.L. Do you think the way the new covenant is added in the Supper to the breaking of bread has some relation to the way God comes into His own through Christ, Christ having His own glory in connection with it?

G.R.C. Would you mind saying more as to the new covenant?

E.C.L. I thought the new covenant would mean that what God has set out to do will be established. Does not the assembly hold these thoughts for the time being until the day of actuality? Christ's glory in that connection is held by faith in fulness and satisfies the heart of the assembly?

G.R.C. So that from the standpoint of our relations with Christ Psalm 45 brings satisfaction to our longing souls and the Lord Jesus has what His heart is seeking in the assembly, even so far as to anticipate the time when the queen will stand on His right hand. Actually, I suppose, that is future but anticipated now, because, according to Ephesians 1, He is head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. The Spirit is here that we might enter into this in our spirits now and that there might be an answer to Christ commensurate with it.

E.C.L. I was thinking that. Sometimes the covenant is just slurred over, but it has been added to the breaking of bread for a reason?

G.R.C. Do you think it is important that in First Corinthians the Lord says, "This cup is the new covenant in my

blood", not adding there, "which is poured out for you"? Is He not anticipating that the assembly will have an appreciation of all that He has secured for God on the basis of His blood? The universe of bliss is secured on that basis.

A.T.G. Do you mean that there is something additional in the reference to the New Covenant in the Epistles to the Corinthians, as over against the references in the Old Testament?

G.R.C. I think the Lord is stressing His blood. I think, in the Supper, He stresses "my body" and "my blood". As to His body, He says, "This is my body which is *for you*", because His body could not be said to have been given for any company except the assembly. But when He speaks of "my blood", I think He would count on the assembly having some understanding of the vast effects of His blood-shedding.

J.W.G. Is it a wider thought than "poured out for you" in Luke 22, involving the whole system of glory based on the redemptive work of Christ?

G.R.C. Quite so. We have to remember, of course, the scripture, that God purchased the assembly with the blood of His own; but it does seem to me that, according to 1 Corinthians 11, in referring to His blood in the Supper, the Lord counted on our intelligent affections apprehending the vast scope of things which has been affected by His blood. According to Colossians 1, "in him all the fulness was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross".

A.W.P. Have you the tabernacle system in mind? The whole system was sprinkled with blood.

G.R.C. Yes, I think the Lord would count on us having some apprehension of the whole system of glory. The assembly has her own place in it. To give the Psalm a present application, she is the queen.

G.H.S.P. The literal blood shedding of Christ is, I think, only recorded in John's gospel. I thought that put it in a most exalted setting. It confirms what you were saying, that the references to the blood need to be elevated in our minds, and in the place that they may have in our service Godward.

G.R.C. So in Ephesians 1 it is the blood of the Beloved,

is it not? "He has taken us into favour in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood."

E.S. Hebrews suggests that we worship the living God on the basis of it. "How much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God?"

G.R.C. We could have no access to God as God apart from the blood of the Christ.

W.S.S. I am very interested in what you have been saying about the cup and the covenant. It has been very much in one's mind of late that the Lord would carry our minds into the fulness of what has been secured. It is opened out to us in a wonderful way as we are together.

W.H.K. "This do, as often as ye drink it, for a remembrance of me." Would that widen our consideration of all the glories that belong to Christ?

G.R.C. Yes. We are calling Him to mind relative to the whole system of blessing, which rests upon the immutable foundation of His blood. And that greatly magnifies Him.

C.J.H.D. The celebration in heaven in Revelation 5 is wonderful. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests."

H.A.H. Yet the inward position as seen in the palace is far greater to the heart of Christ than outward glory?

G.R.C. It is. Only very favoured people have access to the palace, but the queen, of course, has a right to be there in every way. She is all glorious within the royal apartments.

H.A.H. That would go beyond the teaching in First Corinthians?

G.R.C. It would. The Supper is really the doorway into the inward side of things, is it not? In the Song of Songs the spouse says, "The king hath brought me into his chambers." So this song ends up with what is within the palace.

A.M. Would you say a word about the joy entering into the service? It is stressed here. What I notice is that

it is the *Lord's* joy. It refers to the oil of gladness, and then "stringed instruments have made thee glad". The service begins with *our* joy, "Then were the disciples glad", but our fullest joy is to sense His joy, is it not?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. Verse 15 goes back to the joy of the saints, "With joy and gladness shall they be brought." But, as you say, the greatest joy we have is to take account of His joy, although the whole scene is one of gladness. He is anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His companions. They are all anointed with the oil of gladness; there is not a sad face there. Nehemiah indicates that it was not right even to appear before an earthly monarch with a sad face. No one appears before God, properly speaking, with a sad face. All appear before God as anointed with the oil of gladness, but then the Lord Jesus is supreme.

M.H.T. Is it striking that in this love Psalm, as you might term it, attention is drawn, in the first place, to the beauty of Christ as the One who is fairer than the sons of men, and then, in the second place, to the beauty of the assembly as dissociating herself from past history, and "so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty"? We have in one of our hymns: "All fair art Thou, Lord Jesus, the assembly, too, all fair."

G.R.C. "The king will desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him"; and then it goes on further, "All glorious is the king's daughter within"—within the royal apartments. What a fitting companion for the king!

C.J.H.D. Has she not known His right hand according to the Song of Songs in another relation? It says there, "His right hand doth embrace me." Does that not capacitate her to stand in queenly grace at His right hand, because there has been the intimacy of affection?

G.R.C. Yes, I am sure. And then as we are responsive to Christ in this marital way, does it not prepare us for the service of God? The Psalms immediately introduce the city of God. Psalm 46 is the city in a hostile setting, yet "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved", and Emmanuel is known there, "Jehovah of hosts is with us". The assembly is now the vessel of administration in the scene of testimony, and the language of Psalm 46 can therefore be applied to her as here in adverse conditions.

Psalms 47 and 48 lead on to the greatness of God and of the assembly as standing in relation to God.

D.S.H. You were speaking earlier of Christ as the King in Psalm 45. Do you think there is a difference in Psalm 48?

G.R.C. Yes. In Psalm 48 God is the King. Christ has His part in that, of course, because He is God. But the presentation of God as King is a very great matter. It is not now Christ viewed as King as the Man anointed of God, but God Himself as the King. And so Psalm 47, verses 6-8 says, "Sing psalms of God, sing psalms; sing psalms unto our king, sing psalms! For God is the king of all the earth; sing psalms with understanding. God reigneth over the nations; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness". And then the next Psalm says, "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the hill of his holiness. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, *the city of the great king*." What a great thing it would be if we understood the assembly better as the city of the great King, God Himself being the great King.

C.J.H.D. Would you say a word as to the Father and our ministering to Him on the way, as it were, to the great climax of God?

G.R.C. Does not the appreciation of Christ as the Beloved turn our thoughts to the Father? He is our Beloved; but we think of the Father's delight in Him, and our hearts are led to the Father and we worship the Father and enjoy our place in the Father's house, and the blessedness of being loved by the Father with the love wherewith He loves the Son. Each side of the truth is incomparably great. How blessed is our place in the Father's house, "that where I am there ye may be also". But then the city of God is another side of the truth. It is not our place in the Father's house, but God's place, the place of God, as such; the place where He is praised. The Father's house is the inner side of things, but the service of praise is going on now in the scene of testimony and will soon find full expression in the scene of display. But what is going on now in the scene of testimony should be worthy of the great King.

A.B. Does that give the peculiar blessedness of God

being among His people in hostile circumstances? There is a reference in Psalm 46 to the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High, and then it says (verse 5), "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her at the dawn of the morning." God is among His people in the scene of the enemy's power.

G.R.C. Yes, so that these Psalms are very much in line with Matthew's gospel; the King, that is Christ Himself, and what He has in the assembly; and then what the assembly is as the city of the great King. The Lord uses that term in His teaching in Matthew 5: 35. He was referring primarily to the earthly Jerusalem; and yet surely the assembly would not be absent from His mind, for the assembly is in view all through that gospel.

A.A.G. Is not the response to God as such carried on in the intimacy of the knowledge of the Father's love?

G.R.C. I think it is. The Father's house is privilege. The Lord says, "I go to prepare a place for you." The place of privilege and intimacy equips us for our part in the assembly as the great vessel of responsibility. I am not referring to what it is as a responsible vessel down here, but viewing it abstractly in relation to Christ as the vessel which is entrusted with responsibilities which no other vessel in the universe ever will be called upon to fulfil, and in the fulfilment of which there will be no breakdown. And, in that sense, she is the city of the great King, that is God Himself. And the city is an inclusive idea, because it says in the verse already referred to, "the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the Most High". The city includes the sanctuary and the habitations.

E.C.L. Would the light of the city of God according to Psalm 48 affect all the gatherings of the saints?

G.R.C. I think we touch it in the fullest way as we pass in spirit out of the scene of time and locality in the power of the Holy Spirit. In our response to Christ we pass in spirit out of time and locality. We respond to Him in the light of the church complete; and similarly in regard to God. As the city of the great King we are viewing the assembly in its full place and dignity according to the purpose of God.

E.C.L. Is not the city usually linked with administration?

G.R.C. It is, but we must also see that the city is an inclusive idea. It includes the sanctuary. It says, "in the city of our God, in the hill of His holiness", and His praise is connected with it. This is really the service of the sanctuary, but it is taking place in this vessel which is called the city of the great King. It implies that the administrative side has been attended to. There is fulfilled responsibility as to administration, and now it is a question of the praise of God—"Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be *praised* in the city of our God, in the hill of his holiness". And again, "We have thought, O God, of thy loving-kindness in the midst of thy temple." We cannot dissociate the thought of the city and the temple and the sanctuary. The city is the over-all thought, which includes administration, and, as administration is carried out and fulfilled, God's praise is secured in this great vessel. But the whole matter is worthy of the great King.

H.A.H. Does Psalm 48 present it in a military setting, as impregnable?

G.R.C. Quite so.

R.S.W. Does it afford satisfaction for divine affections? The term *new Jerusalem* is mentioned in Revelation.

G.R.C. Yes. The city goes into eternity, the holy city, new Jerusalem. It is the centre of light and influence eternally. Its eternal responsibility is, on the one hand, to maintain in integrity the praise due to God in His greatness, so that, in the presence of the whole universe, glory, honour and majesty are fully ascribed to Him, the Great King, and, on the other hand, to diffuse the light of God and thus influence the whole universe—that is the administrative side. Of course while evil is present administration has to take on a military character, but in the eternal state evil will not be present. Nevertheless it is still the city, and still the city of the Great King, as I understand it, because the word in Revelation 21: 5 is "He that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new." The throne is still there, and the great King is sitting upon it, and the holy city, New Jerusalem, is His city all through eternity, as I understand it.

A.W.P. Do you still connect government with it?

G.R.C. In the way of light and influence, yes. It is the great diffuser of divine light and influence to the universe.

But then internally it is the great centre of praise, and leads the praise of the universe to God, so "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God". I believe the assembly is the vessel which will give a lead to the praises of the universe, as herself led by Christ, all through eternity. She is the city of the great King. She is in every way worthy of the great King, and enclosed in that city, as it were, is the temple, the sanctuary, and the garden. All that is connected with the great King is there.

D.S.H. Why do we get this reference to the loving-kindness of God in verse 9?

G.R.C. Has not everything depended upon that? What have you in mind?

D.S.H. Well, I was wondering if the appreciation of that is a basic thing in connection with the praise of God. Perhaps we may tend to associate God's loving-kindness more with our daily circumstances than with the highest and loftiest thoughts of it.

G.R.C. It seems to me the more we apprehend God as God in His greatness and majesty, the greater will be our appreciation of the mercy and loving-kindness that have fitted us to be in the presence of such a great and glorious God. We are vessels of mercy before prepared for glory.

W.J.S. The God that the sons of Korah appreciated.

G.R.C. Quite so.

G.W.B. Does the thought in the Psalms go as far as the tabernacle of God with men?

G.R.C. That would be another view of the same vessel. On the public side it is the holy city, new Jerusalem, and in that setting prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, showing that those two thoughts go together. What the assembly is to Christ bridally and what she is to God city-wise are linked together. Psalm 45 and Psalm 48 go together in that respect. But the tabernacle of God is the inner life, the inward side of things, where we know the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in personal relations. There is the inward side all the time; but what we are thinking of now is the testimonial side in praise. God has now, and will have in the world to come, and will have in eternity, a vessel capable of ascribing the worship and honour due to Him as the great King.

W.J.S. The end of Psalm 48, "And this God is our God for ever and ever". What a glorious consummation! And so it says, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise to the ends of the earth." There is a vessel that can fully praise God according to His name.

G.R.C. It is the God known to us by the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Yet the disclosure of this name does not mean that other names, each of which express some attribute and glory of Deity, are discarded. "Thy name" would be the aggregated wealth of all.

W.McK. Would you say that while the assembly is a creature vessel, there will be no possibility of breakdown in the praise of God?

G.R.C. That is just it. It has impressed me that the assembly is the great vessel of fulfilled responsibility all through eternity. There is no other creature vessel with such responsibilities allotted to it as the assembly, and yet she will never break down because, as the assembly in Christ Jesus, she is united to Christ, and, in the support of His love and the power of the Spirit, she will fulfil every responsibility allotted to her; all will be carried out without breakdown.

G.H.M. Would you say what is conveyed by Revelation 21 : 22, "I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb"?

G.R.C. It seems that there is such nearness to God Himself in that city that there is no need, as one might say, for an intermediary, because the saints themselves are the temple, they are the shrine. In an ordinary city of men you need a temple in which to approach God. In the earthly Jerusalem there is the temple. But the saints of this dispensation *are themselves the shrine of God*, for the Spirit of God dwells in them. So John sees no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem. God Himself *is* its temple and the Lamb.

A.T.G. Why does it say (Ps. 48 : 10), "Thy right hand is full of righteousness"?

G.R.C. That is a great feature with God. The stability of the whole universe of bliss depends on righteousness.

A.T.G. Does it refer at all to the basis in the blood of Christ that we have had in mind before?

G.R.C. The foundation has been laid in the death of Christ and now "God's righteousness with glory bright" is the basis of all His actings in grace. There would be no stability, no solid basis for the universe of bliss, apart from righteousness. His right hand is full of righteousness, and that is a great matter to praise God about. The Son in speaking to the Father in John 17 says, "Righteous Father". All His purposes of love are carried through in righteousness.

W.H.K. In the new heavens and the new earth righteousness dwells.

A.M. Does righteousness link up with the acts of Jehovah? I was thinking of what you were pressing, "who alone *doeth* wondrous things".

G.R.C. All His acts are righteous.

J.F.P. Would not the reference to the city as *new* in Revelation 21 : 2 confirm what you have been saying as to its eternal character? It goes through the intensive administration of the thousand years and is seen as perennially fresh at the end.

G.R.C. That is very beautiful—"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", and the tabernacle of God. There is eternal freshness and fragrance.

I think we ought to pass on now to Psalm 68. All that has engaged us has been brought to pass by the One who has ascended, and if He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth. Psalm 68 gives the ascension, and Psalm 69 His descent. Psalm 69 is upon Shoshannim, which is 'lilies', showing that, as we respond to Him according to Psalm 45, which is upon lilies, so correspondingly, as true to Him, we shall bear reproach in the testimonial position. We are rejoicing, according to this book of Psalms, in what God has already established testimonially. The assembly is really here. But then it involves a position of reproach. And the lily character manifests itself in fragrant response to the Lord according to Psalm 45 and in sharing His reproach according to Psalm 69, where it says, "The zeal of thy house hath devoured me, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen on me." So that one would like to encourage one's own heart to be more ready for reproach because it helps to develop the lily character with

us. In the morning meeting we shall be more at home in the presence of the King if we learn during the week to suffer with Him.

S.H. Are you thinking of the Song, "As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters"? But she is not allowed to stay in that position for long. She shares the glory of the banqueting house, and so on.

G.R.C. Very good. How could she be other than a lily among thorns in the scene where all the reproach is cast upon her Beloved? We need to be faithful to the Lord in the scene of reproach where He is the song of the drunkards (Ps. 69: 12). Our danger is too much respectability. J.N.D. said the first elements of decline are ease and respectability. You cannot be in the eyes of men a respectable person if you are following Christ.

W.H.K. And how could she have the fragrance of the myrrh and spices, all the powders of the merchant, in the Song of Songs, if she did not share the sufferings?

G.R.C. Quite so.

W.McK. You have referred a good deal to Matthew's gospel. Is it to be noted that Matthew stresses eating in the Supper? I wondered if that would build up a constitution to take part in these reproaches that fell upon Christ?

G.R.C. I think it would. It would strengthen us for the will of God here, would it not? It is the will of God that we should bear the reproach of Christ. But then it is greatly encouraging to have Psalm 68 in our minds in all this—the Lord has ascended; and all that we have spoken about, as having been secured by the God who alone doeth wondrous things, has been secured through the complete victory of Christ. He has dealt with every foe in every way and has ascended up on high and led captivity captive, and received gifts in Man; and it is through the exercise of these gifts that the assembly has been brought to pass in a practical way here on earth. God is doing wondrous things still through the gifts from the ascended Man, so that the assembly should be here in all its features, functioning both as the bride of Christ and as the city of God.

C.J.H.D. I wondered if you would take us on to the matter of the dwelling there of Jah Elohim, which is a very

great title, and does it not link with the title Lord God in Revelation 22: 5?

G.R.C. That is very interesting indeed. While our prepared place is in the Father's house, God's prepared place is in the assembly. Jah Elohim has a place, as we may say, worthy of Him. Is that so?

C.J.H.D. I was wondering whether Jeremiah's beautiful description of God does not fit in with what you have in mind. "Jehovah Elohim is truth, He is the living God and King of eternity."

W.J.S. Does not verse 18 show the way the sons of Korah came into things, "And even for the rebellious, for the dwelling there of Jah Elohim". Saul of Tarsus was such a one. The living God secured a man like Saul and brought him into the assembly setting.

G.R.C. I would like to make another suggestion in connection with this Psalm. The word translated Lord is Adonai. "The Adonai gives the word" (verse 11), and, "The Adonai is among them" (verse 17). He is the One who has ascended on high and He is operating for the dwelling of Jah Elohim. It says, "Blessed be the Adonai" (verse 19), and in verse 22, "the Adonai said, I will bring them from Bashan, I will bring them again from the depth of the sea", and then in verse 32, "Ye kingdoms of the earth, sing unto God; sing psalms of the Adonai". It seems to be a title that attaches in a remarkable way to Christ. Of course, He is also Jehovah of hosts, as in Psalm 24, but in this Psalm He is referred to as Adonai, as also in Psalm 110: 5, "the Adonai at thy right hand". I am wondering whether we have limited too much the idea of lordship in Christ to what He is as made Lord. My impression is that lordship in Christ, as seen in Ephesians, runs into the truth of His Person. It is true that "God has made him, this Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ", but viewed from this standpoint, "Thou hast ascended up on high"—the view of lordship in Ephesians—well, who could ascend up on high? No one less than the Adonai. Who else could be victorious like this and lead captivity captive?

B.G.H. Would verse 26 confirm that?

G.R.C. "In the congregations bless ye God, the Adonai." You are thinking of the word God inserted

there? It is a remarkable expression. I have noticed lately that J.N.D. fully links every reference to Adonai in this Psalm with the Lord Jesus.

W.H.K. Does the reference to ascension stand connected with what He is in His own Person?

G.R.C. That is what I am thinking. And my own impression is that lordship in Ephesians runs into the truth of His Person. "Be strong in Lord and in the might of His strength." It is the Adonai really, I would say, the One who ascended up on high, who ascended above all heavens.

W.J.S. What does that word convey to you?

G.R.C. I think it is a word that specially conveys lordship and rule. It is a name and title of God in the Old Testament. It is often used of God as such, but in this Psalm it particularly relates to Christ. It refers to the position of authority that He has, not because He is made Lord, but because lordship is His in the right of His own Person. Adon is a word that means Lord or Master, but when applied to God, as it always is in its plural form (Adonai) in scripture, it is a very strong expression emphasising the rights of God over His people. It is a kind of office or position but which implies Deity in the One who holds it.

D.W.M. Is it rather remarkable that the Lord finally silenced the opposition in Matthew 22 by quoting from Psalm 110?

G.R.C. Yes. "Jehovah said unto my Adon, Sit at my right hand" (Psalm 110: 1), and then the same Person is referred to in verse 5, "the *Adonai* at thy right hand".

H.W.S. In Revelation 5 you have the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David has overcome. Would that be a similar thought, implying His Deity?

G.R.C. It is remarkable how the Deity of Christ is interwoven in scripture with His manhood. They are put side by side repeatedly, as in the passage you quote.

S.E.W. The last presentation of Himself to the assembly in Revelation is as the Root of David, "the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star", and immediately it says, "And the Spirit and the bride say come."

G.R.C. And I believe that is how this book of Psalms

ends. The last Psalm, Psalm 72, is for Solomon, and Solomon is typical of Him who is the Root and Offspring of David.

W.McK. Is it your thought that the tendency has been to regard lordship in an official way, but, as you are speaking of it now, it would link our hearts up more definitely with His Person?

G.R.C. The Lord Jesus is Lord in the right of His own Person as well as on account of what He has been made as Man. I think this title Adonai belongs to Him in the greatness of the authority He now wields. He wields it not only as made Lord, as Peter says in Acts 2, when he is referring to Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, but also as the One who has ascended up on high, and has led captivity captive. What authority He has! He has led captivity captive, and received gifts in Man.

R.W.S. Does not Hebrew 1: 10 confirm that? "And thou in the beginning, Lord, hast founded the earth, and works of thy hands are the heavens."

C.J.H.D. So, according to Psalm 45, worship is to be addressed to Him by the assembly. "He is thy Lord [Adon] and worship thou Him."

G.R.C. Quite so.

H.A.H. The descent was the action of a Divine Person and the ascent was the action of a Divine Person? He came down from heaven. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascending up where He was before?"

G.R.C. All this enters into what is said here, "They have seen thy goings O God, the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary"; and the Psalm ends with a remarkable ascription of praise to God, ending up with, "It is He that giveth strength and might unto the people. Blessed be God." And that is what we need. He is the God who alone doeth wondrous things, and one of the things He does is to give strength and might to the people so that we can stand in the presence of the greatness of God and ascribe to Him what is His due.

### READING (3)

Psalms 73: 1, 2, 17, 25, 26; 77: 13, 19, 20; 78: 65-72;  
84: 1-7; 87: 1-7; 89: 6, 8, 15, 19, 52

G.R.C. Our theme in these readings is the praises of God in the Psalms, each book yielding its tribute of praise to Him to whom all praise is due, and we have already considered the first and second books. In the first book God is presented in relation to His purpose, the doxology at the close being, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity and to eternity. Amen and Amen", and Christ is presented as the Man of His purpose. In the second book God is praised in connection with the *effectuation* of His purpose, "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone *doeth* wondrous things!" It is a question of what He has done here and now in the scene of testimony, and what He will yet do in the day of display. So it says, "Blessed be His glorious name for ever! and let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen, and Amen", and the longings of the soul, expressed in Psalm 42, are completely satisfied, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." We saw in that book what the assembly is to Christ as the King in Psalm 45, and what it is to God as the great King in Psalm 48, the assembly being His city, where He is praised worthily.

In considering the third book we should note at the outset that the doxology at the close is to God personally. It is not God relative to His purpose nor to what He has done. The book ends with this simple yet moving outburst, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore", and it unfolds His ways with the saints in order that we might come to a profound appreciation of the blessedness of God *Himself*. Thus the doxology is addressed to God in a personal way and the book unfolds His personal dealings with us and His provision for us, so that we might come into the truth substantially and experimentally. The earlier books have dealt with His purpose and the effectuation of it, but now it is a question of our being brought into the present gain of His purpose. The importance of this is apparent,

because it is the will of God that those who will soon be actually in the place that He has purposed for them should be there as having an experimental knowledge of Himself and a profound appreciation of Himself. What we learn of God in this way will remain as substance in our souls and enrich His praise throughout eternity.

The book, therefore, begins with the experiences of a soul, but as bearing on God's general dealings with Israel, "Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a pure heart." Whatever appearances may seem, God is good and He has only good in view. And then he recounts his experiences, "As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped", but at the end of the Psalm he can say, "Whom have I in the heavens? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." That is the great end God has in view in His dealings with us. He is going to fill heaven with people to whom He is everything. God is going to be all in all. We can therefore understand that His operations at the present time are to reach with us the end that the Psalmist arrives at, "Whom have I in the heavens? and there is none on earth I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever." God will fill heaven with people who have learned to use language like that.

The other Psalms bring out in more detail the tenderness of God's dealings with His people, first in leading them like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. The book is not presenting Christ so much in what He effects for God, but rather as provided by God, in His tender consideration, *for us*. So He leads His people in the wilderness like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and in the next Psalm He chose David and took him from the sheep-folds and brought him to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance in the land. How considerate of God to raise up such a Person as this—first as typified in Moses and Aaron, and then in David. Then the experience with God which this book contemplates leads us greatly to value the house of God, so that His house becomes our home; it becomes the most precious place on earth to the believer, more precious than his own home. "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." That is Psalm 84. And then His city becomes so precious to us that we speak

of it, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (87: 3). This is not God speaking about the city exactly, but what *we* can say about it, through experience. And he ends Psalm 87 with, "All my springs are in thee." So I think we can see in these Psalms that God is bringing us into things practically and experimentally in such a manner that when we come to the last Psalm we can say, "Who in heaven can be compared to Jehovah" (89: 6). There is no one like Jehovah, this blessed God we have learned in such a personal and experimental way.

G.H.M. Does Romans give us the relations of God with men? Is that why it is so experimental?

G.R.C. Romans is a very experimental book. We arrive at sonship experimentally in chapter 8. We prove experimentally, as sons, the good and acceptable and perfect will of God in chapter 12, do we not?

S.H. In referring to God having to do with us personally, have you in mind that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are committed to us in such intimate exercises in view of arriving at what you have said?

G.R.C. I have. That brings up the consideration of this name Jehovah, does it not? "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen and Amen."

S.H. You mean that the name Jehovah covers the three Persons that we know so intimately?

G.R.C. I would think that. The name Jehovah was the personal name of God in so far as one could call a name personal in the Old Testament. In our day the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit implies personal relations with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit. Every believer enters into these personal relations.

A.T.G. Is what you are saying about personal relations seen in Paul's word to the Philippians, "*My God* shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"?

G.R.C. Yes. I think when Paul said "My God" his thoughts were not limited to one Person, as we speak. Earlier he says, "I have strength for all things in *him* that gives me power", without distinguishing a particular Person. There are other scriptures which are similarly undefined.

W.H.K. J.N.D. points out that the name Jehovah is the personal name of the One who is spoken of as Elohim in Genesis 1, which would confirm what you are saying.

G.R.C. It would. There are certain settings where the Jehovah of the Old Testament is clearly the Father of the New. (See, for instance, J.N.D.'s note on 2 Cor. 6: 18.) And there are other settings where the Jehovah of the Old Testament is clearly the Christ of the New. J.N.D. says elsewhere that it is as clear to him as the sun at noonday that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. In Isaiah 6 the seraphim says, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts." The comment on that chapter in John 12: 41 is, "These things said Esaias because he saw his glory"—that is, Christ's glory—"and spoke of him." We can rightly say that the passage has an allusion to the Trinity in the three "Holy's", but the Spirit of God has liberty to apply it particularly to Christ.

E.C.L. In Exodus 3, where the name Jehovah is introduced, He says to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM", and then, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah the God of your fathers . . . hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever"; as though the name Jehovah is added to the name, "I AM", which would be inclusive, would it not, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as now made known? He is spoken of as Jehovah in His relations with Israel, but He is the I AM.

G.R.C. That is right.

B.G.H. With reference to God's having personal dealings with His people, would Psalm 81 express His personal feelings and His desires for them? "I am Jehovah thy God, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

G.R.C. And verse 13, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, that Israel had walked in my ways!"

B.G.H. It seems to express the personal feelings of God in a very definite way. God is the speaker in the greater part of it.

G.R.C. It is a Gittith Psalm, a Psalm of pressure, and the pressure is caused through the declension of the people, and yet God uses even that form of pressure, the feeling of the godly soul about the declension and stubbornness of the people, to enlarge the soul in the knowledge of

Himself. The soul gets such a sense of God's yearnings for His people that he arrives at what is stated in the first verse, "Sing ye joyously unto God our strength, shout aloud unto the God of Jacob." He gets such an impression of God! There are three Gittith Psalms, two in this book and one in the first book. In Psalm 8 the pressure in the midst of which the babes and sucklings utter the perfected praise is because of the adversaries, in Psalm 81 the pressure is caused by the state of the people, while in Psalm 84 it is on account of the sufferings of the way in maintaining divine principles (see Ps. 84: 5-6).

B.G.H. Would you be free to say a word as to the desires of the soul in relation to God in view of the word in Psalm 73: 26, "My flesh and my heart faileth: God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever." Does pressure promote desires towards God, or does it produce something substantial in the soul that already has such desires?

G.R.C. I think the two things react upon each other. God works in us by the Spirit so that we all have desires after Himself, but we would never pursue those desires to the divine end without discipline. So that, according to Psalm 73: 14, "For all the day have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." That proves God's love to us. He is good to Israel. Israel suggests the saints viewed according to purpose, and He is good to us. He does not let us settle down like the wicked. He does not give us days of prosperity like the wicked. His ways with us are to encourage and develop those divine instincts and feelings which the Spirit of God has wrought in our hearts towards Him, until they become completely dominant in us. So in the end he says, "Whom have I in heaven? and there is none on earth I desire beside thee." I think God's discipline has reached its end there.

G.H.S.P. Would it be right to say that God's personal dealings are restricted to man, that order of creation? Is there something instructive in that, that "He takes not hold of angels by the hand, but of the seed of Abraham"? Is it instructive that God's moral ways are with that order of being capable of being affected feelingly by them?

G.R.C. It is very affecting to think of that. It would be confirmed, would it not, by the fact that the Son has come

into Manhood—of course the Son is a title which applies only to Him in Manhood, yet it is a title which brings home to us the greatness of the Person who came. And so it says in Hebrews, “Though he were Son, yet learned he obedience from the things that he suffered.” Is it not a remarkable thing that this can be said of Him?

G.H.S.P. I am sure it is. It is very affecting and throws, perhaps, fresh light on all God’s ways with us. These have the definite end in view that He should be served in a feeling way by persons who have been brought to know Him through His moral dealings with us.

G.R.C. And so it is remarkable that the Lord Jesus does not enter into the great offices of which we were speaking yesterday until He has passed through things experimentally. He enters upon His great official positions, according to the purpose of God, as having Himself in manhood experienced all that God could be to a perfect Man, and learned all that obedience meant; an obedience which, in His case, meant *infinitely* more in suffering than that required of any other. That *He* should have been through such experiences is a remarkable thing. And I think that is what it means when it says, “having been perfected”. He is fully qualified for the offices He now holds in glorious manhood because He has been through with God every experience a perfect Man could go through in the scene of testing, and has effected the work of atonement.

W.McK. Philippians has been referred to as the epistle which gives us normal Christian experience, and the Spirit inserts chapter 2 in relation to the Lord Jesus?

G.R.C. You are thinking of the downward steps?

W.McK. Yes. And then the exaltation as a result.

G.R.C. It says in Philippians 2 that He “Became obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”; and Hebrews shows how He felt it, “strong crying and tears”—a very real matter. Many of our disciplinary experiences are because of what we are by nature, whereas He was ever “sin apart”. Yet nothing we shall ever go through could in any way compare with the depths of suffering that were His.

W.J.S. What had you in mind in reading verse 17? Is that the resource of the soul as going this way?

G.R.C. Yes, I thought so. However inexplicable the ways of God may seem, viewed in themselves, when we go into the sanctuaries of God we see the reason for them. We do not understand the details of His ways, for it says in Psalm 77: 19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths are in the great waters; and thy footsteps are not known." There is much in the ways of God which we cannot and shall not understand down here. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and untraceable his ways." But do you not think that, although we cannot explain them, in going into the sanctuaries of God we see the reason for them and can be entirely restful in God.

A.A.B. In Hebrews 12 the peaceable fruit of righteousness is assured to those who are exercised by the Father's discipline. Would you link the thought of being exercised with going into the sanctuaries of God?

G.R.C. I am sure that is true. It shows the need for exercise in passing through discipline, that we should be sufficiently exercised to go into the sanctuaries of God.

B.G.H. What is the distinction between the sanctuaries of God and the sanctuary?

G.R.C. I think the sanctuaries of God refer to the court and the holy place as well as the holiest. The key to understanding why God orders things which, in themselves, we cannot understand, lies in the whole matter covered by the word "sanctuaries of God".

A.B. Does it suggest they are very near? Sanctuaries is in the plural. Is it that they are available for us, and do we touch something of the character of it as among the saints? What a relief to be among His people where God is. How establishing it is.

G.R.C. So as we come into the court, the altar faces us, the altar of burnt offering. That is a key to much. All that God has established for His pleasure eternally rests upon the sufferings of Christ and the solution of all moral issues. Then there is the laver. That also instructs us. Whether the priest approached the altar or whether he went into the tent, he had to go by way of the laver. And then, as we move into the holy place, we learn that we being many are one bread, one body, because the twelve loaves of shewbread are now replaced by one loaf, because the saints of this dispensation are reconciled to God in one

body—I am referring, of course, to the type, and not to the actual bread on the table at the Lord's Supper. Much of God's discipline is to help us to fit into our place in the body. So that in the sanctuaries of God one thing after another is educative. As I look at the altar of burnt offering I can understand God dealing with me in the light of what Christ suffered to establish all for God. When I look at the laver, I can understand God dealing with me in order that I should be ready to accept purification. And, as in the holy place, I can understand God dealing with me, because if He did not deal with me I should never fit into that one bread, one body, I would never be prepared to let my will go. Then there is the light. God must deal with us if the light of the lamps is to shine unhinderedly. Finally, in the Holiest of all we see in all its splendour the glory of the One who sits between the cherubim, and the glory of the Man in whose heart the whole will of God is enshrined. All is educative and we understand that God *must* deal with us; and so we become amenable to His discipline.

W.H.K. Would you say why many of these Psalms are of Asaph?

G.R.C. These Psalms indicate that Asaph was remarkably intelligent as to the ways of God, and if there is a link between him and the Asaph of 1 Chronicles 16: 7, would it not show what a bearing this has on the service of song? Those equipped to take up David's Psalm, that is, typically, to voice the very praises of the Lord Himself in the assembly, were headed by Asaph.

G.H.S.P. Asaph's name, meaning Gatherer, too, would show that he always had in mind what might be gathered up to enrich the service in all these ways?

G.R.C. That is very helpful, because these Psalms are certainly a gathering up of that which would enrich the service in real substance. The earlier books give us light, but this book gives us substance.

H.W. So that this book would be analogous to Leviticus, where the service of God is taken up, drawing near to Him with offerings?

G.R.C. Quite so. It would give the substance for the offerings. Bringing offerings suggests what is substantial in the knowledge of God and of Christ, what has really

been wrought out in the soul, because the offerer is identified with the offering. There can be no true offerings except in the measure in which we have had experience with God.

C.J.H.D. And do we have that experience with God in Christianity in a more affectionately intimate way than was possible in the time of the Old Testament? I was thinking of the title that God takes according to Hebrews 12 in regard of discipline as *the Father* of spirits. When Moses is under discipline himself, and forbidden to go into the land, it says, "Let Jehovah, *the God* of the spirits of all flesh." Would you say that the expression, Father of spirits, covers a very great deal in regard of the affectionate side of sonship in our discipline, as compared with men like Moses and Asaph?

G.R.C. I am glad you have referred to that because, while the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, implies equality of Persons, and, therefore, would lead our hearts out in worship to the Trinity, yet from another standpoint it gives the order of the economy, and in this the Father is dominant, the Son and the Holy Spirit having taken positions relative to Him. And I think in the personal relations of which we are speaking, we have to keep that in mind. The doxology, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore", would include, for us, the full thought of the Trinity, nevertheless, in connection with God's disciplinary ways, the Father has a peculiar and distinct place. According to Hebrews 12, He is the Father of spirits. In Psalm 77 it says, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." It is like a father to take his children by the hand when they are treading an unknown path. "His paths are in the great waters and His footsteps are not known." *We* do not know how to take the next step, but God comes in in a fatherly way and leads us by the hand. True, He does it by way of the Son, but the Father's affections are in it.

C.J.H.D. Yet discipline is not to be connected exclusively with the Father, for 1 Corinthians 11 says that in certain circumstances we are disciplined of the *Lord*. While, in a primary way, in regard of our circumstances, the Father has to do with us, yet it says it is *God* who conducts Himself towards us as towards sons, does it not?

G.R.C. Quite so. And do you not think that the discipline of the Lord is more judicial? We are disciplined of the Lord that we might not be condemned with the world. The *Lord* comes in, He is jealous, and if we go on in a worldly way, He will deal with us. But is not the Father's discipline apart from that question altogether? The Father has our true soul welfare in view and provides all that a Father could provide for us, both in necessary chastening and testing, and also in the comfort and support needed in going through it. He provides Christ, the true "Moses and Aaron", to take us by the hand, leading us in the most tender way so that we might get the gain of the discipline.

E.S. Does John 15 confirm that, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. As to every branch in me not bearing fruit, he takes it away"?

G.R.C. That is a different setting, but you have in mind that the purging is in order that the branch bearing fruit may bear *more* fruit? It is not judicial.

J.D. Would the partaking of His holiness be in mind? The beginning of Psalm 73 speaks of the pure in heart, and in Matthew 5 the Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

G.R.C. That is the vital point. The discipline is needed to purify our hearts, so that nothing might hinder us seeing God. Later, in Hebrews 12, it refers to "holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord".

A.B. Would leading like a flock have in mind the saints being led in God's way, He being the guide, in a combination of tenderness and authority?

G.R.C. You are thinking of Moses and Aaron? Very good. And it does suggest, does it not, that we do not know one footstep ahead. He is leading us in God's way whose footsteps are not known, so that, without the hand of Moses and Aaron we could not get along at all. It is a wonderful thing to be in a path of dependence, and yet a path where we are the objects of such tender care. And you will notice that we are not isolated in it. He leads His people like a flock. God has individual dealings with each one, but yet we are moving together.

E.C.L. Does the thought of confidence, which is to be restored from man to God, come into this thought of the

Father's dealings? The Lord's ministry from John 13 onwards is in order that the disciples might be at home in the Father's presence, having full confidence in Him, in order that they might move forward into the most precious thoughts of God.

G.R.C. The leading in Psalm 77, which promotes confidence, would prepare us for the leading in Psalm 78, which stands related to the greatest thoughts of God. It is a real test to be in a path where we do not know what the next step is to be, but where we are content because such a glorious Person holds our hand, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He is viewed in these Psalms not as the Man of God's purpose, as in the first book, but as the One God has provided *for us*. He is leading His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. And as we develop in the confidence which comes from that kind of leading, in the path of responsibility in the wilderness, we shall be amenable to the leading that is suggested in David. "He chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the suckling-ewes, he brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. And he fed them according to the integrity of his heart and led them by the skilfulness of his hands." It is skilfulness here because he is leading them in relation to the service of God, in relation to His sanctuary like the heights, spoken of in verse 69.

B.G.H. Would you say the choosing of the tribe of Judah would imply the praises of God being secured?

G.R.C. I think so. We have to learn that the assembly is not simply a family setting. "He rejected the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim"—that is, the family setting—"but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved." This is the assembly in its dignity—"He built his sanctuary like the heights"—and only the true David can guide us skilfully in this setting.

A.A.B. As typified in Moses and Aaron the Lord would be endeared to us as leading us out, and in David as leading and bringing us in?

G.R.C. Quite so.

M.H.T. This follows the darkest moment, when God delivered His strength into captivity and His glory into

the enemy's hand. "Where sin o'er all seemed to prevail, redemption's glory shed."

G.R.C. God brings in the best at the very worst time. That is what we are proving in our own day.

M.H.T. And is it of interest that the third book *contemplates* a time of great suffering for the remnant in a future day, when the heathen will come into the inheritance of God and God's people will be dispossessed, but it is in those circumstances of pressure that the service of song to which you have referred will be enriched. Ought that not to be a great encouragement to us who form part of the assembly at the present time?

G.R.C. It should, indeed. All the circumstances are ordered of God to bring just the amount of pressure needed. Nothing more than is necessary is ever allowed by God. So that even in that darkest day for Israel, which lies in the future, there will be just the needed pressure to bring about the end God has in view, that Jehovah should be everything to them. And God is working to the same end with us, for He will have us go into heaven as a people to whom He is everything.

G.H.S.P. Do you think we might link the doxology in Jude with this book? I am thinking of the dark days which that epistle depicts, the days of apostasy, and the way it finishes with, "But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling." Is there a veiled reference in that to being led by the hand? And then, "to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour", and so on. Does it indicate that God secures full response in the very darkest day?

G.R.C. That is excellent. That doxology would seem to link up these two Psalms. To keep us from stumbling might be like the hand of Moses and Aaron in the difficult path of the wilderness, and then to present us blameless before His glory might link with the sanctuary at the end of Psalm 78.

C.J.H.D. Is there not comfort in the fact that our time of recovery has involved God doing things from *behind* the enemy and not by means of a frontal attack? "He smote his adversaries in the hinder part." Does that not indicate that we have to accept the reproach of the smallness and meanness of things apparently outwardly in the face of great religious movements around us?

G.R.C. Very good. So that the façade of Christendom remains, but God has smitten them in the hinder parts.

C.J.H.D. Exactly; the reproach is really behind them where they least expect it. But we must accept the public reproach. We shall never be anything publicly, ecclesiastically, in the eyes of the world.

B.G.H. Would you say a word as to the name Jehovah of hosts occurring in Psalm 84?

G.R.C. I think in this Psalm it is not so much to stress what is military but rather to stress that, as we should say, He has filled His house with sons. It is the attractiveness of His house. Not only is Jehovah Himself attractive to the soul, but His house and all that surrounds Him becomes exceedingly attractive also. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for *the courts of Jehovah*; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Thus God's house becomes the home of the soul. "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house." Some of us are looking for a house to live in down here, but it is better to find this house.

S.E.W. Is not the latter part of verse 8 touching, "Hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah"?

G.R.C. Jacob was the one who first got light as to the house of God, and it was not at all attractive to him at first. But then the word comes, "Go up to Bethel and dwell there". He was to find his home there. And I think the soul really finds its home in the house of God in Psalm 84.

S.E.W. And God brought it to pass with Jacob.

G.R.C. He did. And so in this verse, "The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself." I wonder whether we have found this in the house of God? It may be we are not prepared to accept the place of a sparrow. It links on with what Mr. D. has just been saying, the place of reproach. The Lord says, according to Psalm 102, that He was as a pelican in the wilderness and as a sparrow alone on the housetop.

J.C.T. Is it interesting that in Zechariah the name Jehovah of hosts is used a good many times? While it says, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" it speaks of the greatness of what God is setting up.

G.R.C. Very good. It is well in a day of small things to remember that He is Jehovah of hosts. Things outwardly may seem small, but God will never be short of numbers;

and as we become acquainted with His house and learn to dwell there in our spirits, *we* are not short of numbers.

G.W.B. If the Spirit says “many sons” you may be sure there *are* many.

G.R.C. So that the title Jehovah of hosts in this setting would be linked with the many sons. The Psalmist represents a person in whom the affections of sonship are formed in such a manner that God’s house is his home. He is nothing but a sparrow here—an object of reproach—but he has found a house, the house of God. He is a swallow, too, always a stranger here, a bird of passage; but the swallow has found “a nest for herself, where she layeth her young, thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts” (Ps. 84: 3).

E.C.L. Why is altars in the plural? In the court there was one altar.

G.R.C. I think the soul is brought to appreciate both altars, so you have the expression, “Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my king and my God”. We ought to have an appreciation of both of the altars and to use them both. I believe one links especially with “my king” and the other with “my God”.

D.W.M. Would Samuel have learned a lot in his young days as being at home in the temple, in a time of great weakness publicly? He develops afterwards as a leader of the people of God.

G.R.C. That is very good, because it shows that we cannot be too young to find our home in God’s house.

W.McK. The younger son in Luke 15 shows how readily that place is found. The reproach is not removed in the eyes of the elder son. He is still in reproach, but he is tasting what is inside in the house of God.

G.R.C. So that, from the divine side, our home is there from the outset, is it not? “Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it.” But the experiences of this book of Psalms are to make it truly home to us from our side. And I do not believe it will become that unless we accept the place of the sparrow and the swallow in this world.

E.C.L. “They will be constantly praising thee.” Is that going on continually and not only when the saints are together? It is an attitude of soul?

G.R.C. It shows how much this matter bears on our

subject, the praises of God, because this kind of person will be *constantly* praising God.

E.M.W. Would you say a little more regarding your remark as to the two altars? You made a particular connection.

G.R.C. The altar of burnt offering is a place of immense provision. "We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle" (Heb. 13: 10). We find abundance of food there. Then there is the privilege of prayer and supplication at both altars. I think at the altar of burnt offering the character of prayer would be more in keeping with "my king", that is, with God as King of the ages, the blessed and only Ruler, whereas at the golden altar their character would be in keeping with "my God". Solomon prayed in the court. He prayed in the presence of the brazen altar.

S.H. Does the Psalmist indicate the two altars where he refers to his prayer being set forth before God as incense and the lifting up of his hands as the evening oblation? (Ps. 141: 2).

G.R.C. The golden altar was the incense altar and connects with the immediate presence of God and what is fragrant to Him; particularly, of course, in the Person of Christ. In Revelation 5: 8 the incenses, however, are said to be the prayers of the saints. But the altar of burnt offering is connected with the greatness and majesty of God. That is where, typically, He was glorified, according to all that He is in His nature and attributes. All that is due to Him as the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, was maintained at the altar of burnt offering, viewed in its typical significance.

A.B. Would these things give character to our meetings for prayer?

G.R.C. I think so. The kind of prayer that links with the brazen altar is the prayer of 1 Timothy 2. That is linked with the King of the ages (1 Tim. 1: 17). Paul says, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in dignity." Solomon's outlook was outward at the altar of burnt offering. But the altar of incense is inside and there you are thinking of God and His purposes which centre in Christ.

C.J.H.D. Very fine. And are not our young people to be held in relation to all of this? We may marvel that the Spirit of God should speak of the swallow laying her young in such a position. Is that not how they are to be held, that we are to indicate to them that we are birds of passage, that our destiny is a heavenly one, that we shall be gone overnight, as it were, and they are brought up in that atmosphere.

G.R.C. That is excellent. This certainly shows where we need to lay our young. We need to lay our young at God's altars. They are safe there. And what is so encouraging is that the nearer you bring young children to the altars nowadays, the happier they seem to be.

G.W.B. Has the brazen altar in mind the place of acceptance that has been secured for man in Christ?

G.R.C. It has. That truth enters into our prayers for men.

G.W.B. The golden altar relates to what is for God Himself, from the priestly company?

G.R.C. I think so. Following this we get the kind of exercises that mark those who find their home in God's house. They are the persons of whom it says, "in whose heart are the highways". If we value the house of God we shall always have the highways in our hearts, the highways of divine principles, and, that being so, we shall find the valley of Baca. The maintenance of divine principles means that we are never out of the valley of weeping, but we make it a well-spring.

G.H.S.P. Is that why Genesis 35, where Jacob has the word, "Go up to Bethel and dwell there", is a chapter of almost unparalleled suffering and sorrow in the household setting, including the death of Rachel; but Jacob rises above it in the naming of his son, "Son of the right hand".

G.R.C. In that chapter the highways were truly in his heart.

In Psalm 87 we move on to the appreciation of the city, but still on the experimental line. And so the word is, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." It is a great thing when the saints can speak glorious things about the assembly as the city of God. As we were saying yesterday, the city is an inclusive thought. It includes the habitation—the Lord God Almighty is its temple and the Lamb; His servants serve Him, so that

priestly service proceeds in it, and the tree of life is there. All that is most precious to God is enclosed in the city. It is indeed a glorious vessel, the city of God. We ought to appreciate the assembly more and more. What a glorious vessel it is! "Glorious things are spoken of thee." Who is speaking? Let us all be speaking.

B.G.H. "All my springs are in thee."

G.R.C. Quite so. Just as in Psalm 84 his home is in the house of God, so here all his springs are in the assembly as the city. It is what the singers and the dancers say, showing how much it bears on the service of God; and if we answer to this, and all our springs are truly in the city of God, it will be evident that we were born there. "Of Zion it shall be said, this one and that one was born there." How does it become evident that we were born there, that she is our mother city? It is because we are among the singers and the dancers who say, "All my springs are in thee."

N.F.A. Does the thought of the city have some place in regard of our service Godward? You mentioned it yesterday in relation to praises, and you mentioned it again now.

G.R.C. According to Psalm 48 it is the place where God is praised. "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the hill of his holiness." I think it is the assembly viewed as the great vessel of praise. It encloses everything that is most precious to God. On the other hand, of course, the city is the vessel of light, for the diffusion of light, the light of God. What do you say as to that?

N.F.A. I was wondering whether it should be referred to in the service of God?

G.R.C. I think it should, in the light of this Psalm. "Glorious things are spoken of thee." I think God would appreciate it if we could speak some glorious things about His city, because it is very precious to Him.

J.L.W. Revelation 21 and 22 are full of those glorious things.

G.R.C. They are. What a development there is in those chapters of the glorious things of the city.

D.W.M. Is that a justification of Hymn 221, "Jerusalem the holy, whose builder is her God"?

G.R.C. I think there is full justification for that hymn. This Psalm confirms it.

W.McK. Is it in your mind that along with the increased apprehension that the saints have of God, as He has been now presented to us in the ministry, there should also be an increased apprehension of the city of God as supplying an answer to all that has come out?

G.R.C. Yes. It is the only vessel in which the great King finds an adequate answer in praise. Everything about the city is worthy of the great King—all its appointments, as one might say.

J.W.G. Mr. Taylor has referred to the city as being solid, substantial.

G.R.C. And that shows the importance of our coming into things substantially in our souls, according to this book of Psalms. And so, in the final verses, we read, it really goes back in principle to what we began with in the 73rd Psalm, "Whom have I in the heavens? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee" (73: 25). But it is not simply personal now, it is a challenge to the universe. "Who in the heavens can be compared with Jehovah? Who among the sons of the mighty shall be likened to Jehovah? . . . Jehovah, God of hosts, who is like unto thee? The strong Jah, and thy faithfulness is round about thee" (Ps. 89: 6, 8). What a wonderful thing to arrive at this real appreciation of God Himself. It would lead us on to the doxology, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen and Amen."

J.C.T. We arrive at this by way of the assembly?

G.R.C. Yes, by way of the house and the city, both of which are the assembly.

#### READING (4)

Psalms 90: 1,2, 13-17; 91: 1, 2; 96: 7-10; 102: 1-3, 10, 23-28; 103: 1-5; 104: 1, 2; 105: 1-3; 106: 1-5, 47, 48

G.R.C. We are engaged in these readings with the praises of God in the Psalms, and have already considered the first three books. The first book presents God relative to His purpose, and Christ as the Man of His purpose, bringing out, among other things, the glory of the Christ,

the Son of God in Psalm 2, and the declaration of God's name in Psalm 22, the Son Himself being the Declarer. That book ends with, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity and to eternity! Amen and Amen!" The second book presents God as the One who effectuates His purpose, having effectuated it here and now in testimony, and shortly to effectuate it in display. And so the note of praise at the close is, "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!" In the third book we saw that God has personal dealings with His people with a view to our coming into the truth of the first two books vitally and substantially, and to our acquiring a personal knowledge of God, so that the book ends, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore! Amen and Amen." This doxology does not refer to God relative to His purpose or to what He does. It is most blessed as expressing the way the soul is brought to appreciate God Himself, as learned in His ways here in discipline. His way is in the sanctuary; there we see the reason for His dealings with us; and His way is also in the sea; His path is in the great waters and His footsteps are not known. There is much that is inexplicable as to the detail of His ways, but in them we learn Himself and prove the provision He has made for us in Christ. Christ is presented in the third book as *provided for us*. According to Psalm 77, He led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron, in those paths where they did not know one step in advance; and in Psalm 78 He raised up David to feed His people and to guide them by the skilfulness of his hands in relation to the sanctuary. All this leads to a living appreciation on our part of the house of God in Psalm 84, and of the city of God in Psalm 87. God's house becomes our home in Psalm 84, and His city becomes glorious in our eyes in Psalm 87—"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." We are marked by the features of those that are born there, and can say, "All my springs are in thee." One is impressed with the wonderful character of God's ways with us in order that we may be brought into things practically, and, above all, brought to a profound appreciation of the blessedness of

God Himself, so that we can say, "Blessed be Jehovah for evermore! Amen and Amen."

The fourth book, I think, has in view days of recovery. In the exercises that mark days of recovery we learn God's faithfulness and unchangeableness. Whatever has happened amongst His people in the sphere of responsibility, He has never changed. So that an appreciation of God is wrought out in the souls of the saints in days of recovery that has its own special features. The book furnishes guidance for our exercises in such days. First of all, Psalm 90 shows that we have to go back to first principles; it is the prayer of Moses, the man of God. Since we are in the Psalms it does not give his doctrine, but in going back to his doctrine, as typical of apostolic doctrine in our day, it is a great thing, also, to go back to his prayer and thus to his own view of God, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, and thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from eternity to eternity thou art God." This surely is the keynote to recovery. And then at the end of the Psalm there is the prayer, "Return, Jehovah", the covenant name, the name of relationship being used. That would be the earnest desire in days of recovery. We would return to God, but our prayer would be that He would return to us.

The next point of instruction for days of recovery is that we look on to the Lord's coming. We go back to first principles, on the one hand, and look on to the Lord's coming on the other. And so the Psalms that follow anticipate the Lord's coming, and we need to do so in order to be maintained in buoyancy in days when, in spite of spiritual recovery, things can never return to their pristine beauty publicly. Not until the Lord comes will the public position be remedied. Psalms 93, 97 and 99 begin, "Jehovah reigneth", and Psalm 96 gives the language of souls that are in the hope and present anticipation of the Lord's coming, "Give unto Jehovah, ye families of peoples, give unto Jehovah glory and strength . . . say among the nations, Jehovah reigneth!" We, in our spirits, anticipate His coming, and testimony is rendered from that standpoint.

H.W. Is there confirmation as to God's attitude in days

of recovery in the post-captivity prophets, particularly Zechariah, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. . . . I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it" (Zech. 1: 14, 16).

G.R.C. Such prophetic testimony would encourage us to voice this prayer, "Return, Jehovah." While we look on to the Lord's actual coming, we count on Him coming to us at the present time. We call upon Him to return, counting on His faithfulness to come amongst His people now. Scriptures such as John 14: 18, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you", and Matthew 18: 20, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", are peculiarly encouraging in the last days.

I suggested reading Psalm 102 because it refers to the sufferings of Christ as enduring God's indignation and wrath on account of the unfaithfulness of the people, whose representative He had become, in wondrous grace. It is that character of His sufferings which would specially affect us as we look back on the unfaithfulness of God's people. And in connection with these sufferings, which culminated in His being cut off in the midst of His days, the unchangeableness of His Person is brought out, "But thou art the same"—a title of Deity most comforting in days of recovery. As the hymn says, "Thou art the Same, the one unchanging God". The appreciation of God as the Same, and of the Lord Jesus, being God, as the Same, leads on to the praises of the last Psalms of the book; the praise of God in connection with His healing power in Psalm 103, creation in Psalm 104, His ways of grace in Psalm 105 and His ways in government with His people in Psalm 106. Psalms 105 and 106 are reviews which belong to days of recovery, reviews of God's ways in grace, on the one hand, and His ways in government on the other; and they end with this prayer, "Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise." The one desire of the soul is that God would save His people and gather them from among the nations; and for what purpose? To give thanks unto His holy name and *to triumph in His praise!* Then follows the doxology,

“Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from eternity and to eternity! And let all the people say, Amen!” Nothing less is in mind than that *all* the people should be in it. All will be in it when the Lord comes, but meantime, however few may be actually available, we have nothing less than this in our minds and prayers, “Let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!”

S.H. Is much of what you have said gathered up in a concise way by the people as recovered in Nehemiah 9, “Stand up, bless Jehovah your God from eternity to eternity. And let men bless the name of thy glory, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou art the Same, thou alone, Jehovah”? And then you have references to creation, quickening and other things which involve the work of God in us.

G.R.C. That is very confirming. It shows how their thoughts were running in line with the fourth book of Psalms.

S.E.W. Is it interesting, in Nehemiah 9: 7, that it goes on to refer to Abraham, “Thou art the Same, Jehovah Elohim, who didst choose Abram and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees”? You were referring to first principles.

G.R.C. That helps us because the name God in Psalm 90: 2 (E1) is first used in connection with Abraham. The name Lord in Psalm 90: 1 is Adonai. Adonai is a divine title, suggesting the lordship and authority that is inherent in Deity. In many places (e.g. Ps. 68: 17–18; 110: 5) it refers to the Lord Jesus; but, of course, sovereign rights and authority belong also to the Father and the Spirit. In this Psalm the title is applied to God, as such; and its suitability is evident, for when we are thinking of our transgressions and failure we rightly think of the authority of the God whose rights we have flouted and whose commandments we have disobeyed. Yet we turn to Him because, although we have forfeited every claim by our practical conduct, we know that Adonai has rights in mercy as well as in authority, and therefore it is to Him that we cling. And so the prayer is, “Adonai, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, and thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from eternity to eternity thou art

God." Now the word "God" is "El", and it is first used in connection with Abraham. It means 'the Mighty'; God viewed as the mighty, stable, eternal God: "from eternity to eternity thou art 'El'." In days of recovery Israel needed to go back, not only to Moses, but to Abraham, the one to whom the promises were made by the mighty God. In our case we need to go back to God's purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time.

E.M.W. Is it interesting that Abraham is the first to use that title 'Adonai'? In Genesis 15: 2 we read, "And Abram said, Lord (Adonai) Jehovah, what wilt thou give me? seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus."

G.R.C. That is very interesting. God uses the name 'El' and Abraham uses the title 'Adonai'.

H.W.E. Does it also refer to God as the source of all blessing?

G.R.C. The name 'Adonai' conveys lordship and authority, whereas Jehovah is the One who is faithful to all His commitments, the One who is, who was, and who is to come. Abraham uses both names. 'Adonai' is important there because it says he believed Jehovah, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. It was the obedience of faith. Disobedience is a denial of the rights and authority of God.

W.C.P. Is it interesting that almost every name of God used in the Old Testament appears in the Psalms? There are sixteen or seventeen different names, many of them in this fourth book.

G.R.C. I think an understanding of them would greatly enlarge our apprehension of God in His greatness and thus promote our worship.

W.C.P. Are not the exercises connected with days of recovery enriching the saints universally in their appreciation of God in every way in which He is presented to us in scripture?

G.R.C. I think so; and the apprehension of the meaning of these names in no wise belittles the name now declared; the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the greatest name of all. The more we enter into the fulness attaching to that name, in which God Himself

has come out to us in order to be known to us in such personal relationships, the more we shall value the names in the Old Testament, each of which is expressive of some attribute of Deity, some feature of greatness proper to Him as God.

J.L.W. Does the first verse of Psalm 103 help in that connection? "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name"? Would "his holy name" include these manifold glories?

G.R.C. "Bless *Jehovah*" would show that in the closing Psalms of the book there is full restoration to the sense of relationship, Jehovah being the name of relationship with Israel. Similarly, we are coming into the full blessedness of God's name of relationship in our day. Its meaning is being unfolded more and more to us, the meaning of the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and the blessedness of the economy of love and grace connected with it. I think you have in mind that as restored to the sense of relationship, our affections would embrace every feature of divine glory previously disclosed, so that His name becomes a great inclusive thought?

J.L.W. Yes, "All that is within me" it says. And our affections are fully engaged.

G.R.C. So that, as knowing God in the name of relationship, and as in the joy of our place in the divine economy of love, we can bless His holy name in every feature of that name which has been disclosed from the beginning of time.

G.H.S.P. Is it interesting that during the ministry within the knowledge of most of us the outstanding features have been the truth as to the Person of the Son, and then the truth as to the Person of the Spirit, and then the truth as to God Himself, in these final days of recovery?

G.R.C. That seems to be the way the Spirit of God has been leading in our time. Prior to that the truth as to the Person of the Father had been stressed, I believe.

A.A.G. Would the way in which we know God now have particular reference to His nature, whereas the varied names in the Old Testament relate more to the attributes of Deity?

G.R.C. I think that is right. In the Person of the Son there is now the full display of His nature, as well as His

character or moral attributes. His moral attributes were not in full display in the Old Testament, that is, His mercy, kindness, grace and compassion; but now they are in *full* display. The Son is the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance. But then in the Old Testament there are names which express the attributes of greatness, strength, stability, majesty and splendour that attach to God, and the Spirit of God expects us to carry all those forward, because they all attach to the God who has come out to us in such an intimate, and, we may say, loving way, according to His nature.

A.A.G. So that the knowledge of God in His nature would make these varied attributes of greatness, majesty, stability, and so on, extremely attractive, would it not?

G.R.C. It would.

W.H.K. "And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us." Would that not include all that has shone out of God? All is to be reflected in the saints.

G.R.C. That is very beautiful.

A.A.B. Would the way John writes the book of Revelation after the departure from Paul and his allusion to the Lord's coming in the first chapter, and to the Spirit and the bride saying "Come" in the last, link with the thought of "Return, Jehovah"?

G.R.C. I think the first verse of Psalm 90 bears on John's ministry, "*thou* hast been *our* dwelling-place". There is the thought of *His* dwelling-place among His people, and in that connection there has been unfaithfulness, but it does not alter the fact that He is *our* dwelling-place. He has never changed, and I believe John particularly brings out the unchangeableness of the God who has been so fully declared. So that John's ministry is for days of recovery.

A.A.B. "He that abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

G.R.C. Quite so. So that while God is *our* dwelling-place, our desire is to provide, at the close of the dispensation, conditions down here suited to *His* dwelling-place. As we return to Him, and prove the resource we have in Him, we find strength to take up the position of responsibility and to say, "Return, Jehovah. . . . Satisfy us early with thy loving-kindness; that we may sing for joy and

be glad all our days." And then, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants." We yearn to see something substantial down here in the way of recovery, so that while the church in responsibility can never be recovered, yet we desire that features proper to the assembly, which is the house of God, and the city of God, might come into evidence.

S.H. Would you say that Moses' song in Deuteronomy 32, much of which is judicial, and where this very word is used as to Jehovah repenting in favour of His servants, shows how God will come in in regard to His people? It says, "Shout for joy, ye nations, with his people, for he avengeth the blood of his servants, and rendereth vengeance to his enemies, and maketh atonement for his land, for his people."

G.R.C. Quite so. So Psalm 90 ends, "let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us"—a wonderful thought, that there should be seen in the saints an answer to the revelation of God; and then His work appearing and the work of *our* hands established. There is something concrete thus in the way of recovery.

The next Psalm more definitely goes back to Abraham, the one to whom the immutable promises of God were made. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." El Elyon, the Most High God, and El Shadai, the Almighty God, were titles disclosed to Abraham, and I believe they are of great encouragement in a day of recovery. "Most High" is used in Daniel in connection with the political scene. God ordered the whole political scene in the Babylonish and Persian empires in view of what was outwardly but a small remnant, but was marked vitally by all the features of the original. And that is what God has done in these last days. He has ordered, and is ordering, political matters, with a view to an expression of features proper to the whole assembly, though seen, it may be, in but a few. And then there is the shadow of the Almighty. What a comfort that is in days of recovery—what cannot God do?

J.D. Does Paul have this in mind in Acts 20, "I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace", and then in Timothy, speaking to him as the man of God, he says, "God, who preserves all things in life."

G.R.C. The man of God particularly comes into view in days of recovery; and life is also a great feature. The test is not simply outward order, but life.

W.H.K. Paul refers to "the blessed and only Ruler", the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship. That would link with the "Most High"?

G.R.C. I would think so. As in the secret place of the Most High, we can be restful in political matters, and the shadow of the Almighty keeps us restful in spiritual matters, because what cannot God do in a spiritual way? The title 'Almighty' is introduced in connection with quickening the dead.

H.W.S. Luke 2 refers to the arrangement of the political sphere, and in Luke 1 it says, "He shall be great and shall be called Son of the Highest."

G.R.C. It is very interesting that Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the "Son of the Most High" (Luke 1: 32 (footnote J.N.D.)). The Most High is supreme in every sphere, and the beginning of Luke stresses that.

A.T.G. Luke 6 says, "Ye shall be sons of the Highest." It is the same word, is it not?

G.R.C. Yes. It is those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty who can manifest the character of "sons of the Highest". They are maintained in peace and moral elevation whatever is going on around. They are in spirit above the scene of political agitation, they know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men; and, on the other hand, they are not unduly disturbed by, although they feel keenly, what is going on in the profession, because they know the Almighty. They trust in Him to let His work appear to His servants and to bring about results, even in days of greatest weakness, on the principle of life out of death.

P.S.L. Is the secret place illustrated by the hill country in Luke 1?

G.R.C. The hill country was a place of elevation, above the level of things here.

A.T.G. May we refer to a certain agitation in relation to what has been taking place in London in a big and popular way? If we are in the gain of "sons of the Highest", should we not be restful in regard of that?

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. It is a question of “let *thy* work appear to *thy* servants”. God is working in spite of everything, and by whatever means He chooses. But then there is *our* work, the work of *our* hands, and we are to have *holy* hands. “Establish thou it.” As to all the works that are done in Christ’s name, the question is, are they of such a character that God can establish them?

R.H.S. Does 2 Corinthians 6: 16–18 help as to the Almighty? It brings in the thought of dwelling, “I will dwell among them”, and then the matter of separation.

G.R.C. And is not separation specially vital in days of recovery?

R.H.S. I thought so.

G.R.C. In that connection God says, “I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

R.H. Daniel says, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. And it is he that changeth times and seasons.”

G.R.C. That links with the Most High, a title which occurs much in Daniel—“the Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4: 17). Everything is according to His will, and in view of His testimony that is the thing to see. It is very encouraging that God enters in a peculiar way into the political scene in days of recovery, with a view to what is outwardly so weak being preserved and protected and going forward, in order that the dispensation should finish as it began, not in numbers but in features. Thus the Spirit and the bride say “Come”.

C.J.H.D. I am wondering whether there is not great confirmation in the last book of the Old Testament which accords so well with Luke. There is the statement of such majesty, “I am a great King . . . and my name is terrible among the nations”, and then, in view of our returning and service, it says, “ye shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not”. Then there is the last reference to Moses, so beautiful in regard of the second giving of the law in grace at Horeb. I was wondering whether Psalm 90 was not written on Horeb, not Sinai.

G.R.C. Malachi is most interesting. "From the rising of the sun even unto its setting my name shall be great among the nations; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure oblation", it says (Mal. 1 : 11), and in principle God has brought that about. It looks on to the millennium, but in principle God has brought it about in these last days.

C.J.H.D. And then the unchangeableness of God: "I Jehovah change not, and ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

G.H.S.P. The reference to the latter glory of this house being greater than the former would confirm, do you think, what you said at the beginning about something special entering into the days of recovery? Do you think our enjoyment of that is dependent upon our maintaining the principles of separation?

G.R.C. I do, and that bears on Mr. G.'s remark as to what has been going on in London, because what is not based upon holiness and separation to God will not stand. While souls are saved in God's sovereignty, and we are thankful for that, yet it is a question of "the work of our hands, establish thou it". The test of a thing is how far God establishes it in its results. The popular revivals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have left no permanent results in testimony according to God. Souls have been saved and we thank God for that, and some may have been brought into the path of separation, but from the movements themselves there has been nothing that God could establish. We need to understand that. "Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us, and . . . the work of our hands, establish thou it." Establishment comes, not by using Egyptian methods, but by the beauty of Jehovah our God being upon us. It is a great thing to be on lines in which God will establish the work of our hands.

H.W. That all emphasises, does it not, the importance of John's ministry, not setting up anything outward but bringing in living and holy conditions. The Lord says in His prayer, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name."

G.R.C. Very good.

R.F.D. Do you think that, as we are engaged with the truth relating to recovery, the Holy Spirit would engage

us with *all* the truth, not just one section of it. Popular evangelism limits itself to one aspect.

G.R.C. I am sure that is right. Every feature of the truth of the assembly should be in expression in these last days. But then we need to see that for anything in the way of public display we have to wait for the Lord's coming. It is not for us to have in mind public display now because of the humiliating failure of the profession in which we have part. As far as public display is concerned, we have to await the Lord's coming. But there is the anticipation of it. It is a great theme of testimony that the Lord is about to come, and it keeps us in buoyancy. But then according to Psalm 101 He comes to us now: "I will sing of loving-kindness and judgment: unto thee, Jehovah, will I sing psalms. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. When wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. I will set no thing of Belial before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." Does that not set out the secret exercises which provide conditions for the Lord to come to us now? "When wilt thou come unto me?" The Lord is coming publicly shortly, but He comes to us now as there are conditions.

E.C.L. You would expect the Lord to come to us, in some sense, at every gathering, not only at the Supper, would you not? I wonder whether we have had this sufficiently in mind on all occasions of gathering. If the Lord comes He will give a distinct impression of Himself, suited to the occasion, will He not?

G.R.C. One has thought that the Lord's word "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you" (John 14: 18) has a wide bearing. He comes in a peculiar way at the Supper, but we count on Him to enter into every occasion, do we not? On an occasion like this, what emptiness there would be if the Lord were not here. Hence our exercise at all times is that there might be conditions of righteousness, holiness and dependence so as to secure His presence. As regards the individual, He says, "he that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him"; and then, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father

will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

C.E.J. Would Genesis 17 and 18 allude to dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty? In the seventeenth chapter, was not Abraham invited to abide under the shadow of the Almighty; and in the eighteenth he is dwelling in his house, as it were, with the heavenly visitors.

G.R.C. Very good. So that the word at the beginning of Genesis 17 is, "I am the Almighty God: walk before my face and be perfect." And God was going to express the proof of His almightiness, was He not, in the bringing in of Isaac? We can count on God proving His almightiness in bringing in what is spiritual amongst the saints today. But then as you say, in the eighteenth chapter, in the restfulness of that knowledge, Abraham was able to provide conditions for Jehovah to come to him.

F.L.R. Would you say why three Psalms are merged together in 1 Chronicles 16, where the ark is brought into the tent which David spread for it? I was wondering whether the tent would indicate a provisional idea, because David's day was a day of recovery. The ark had been in other hands, and the three Psalms, 96, 105 and 106, are blended together in the first Psalm delivered to Asaph.

G.R.C. That is very interesting. Does it not show how under the Lord's hand in the service of song, contributions are blended? It says, "On that day David delivered first this psalm to give thanks to Jehovah through Asaph and his brethren." It came, as it were, from David, and yet it was a blend of contributions.

D.S.H. Would you say some more about the blend of contributions?

G.R.C. Is it not instructive as to the service of song? David said, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22: 22), and he did so on the day that the ark was brought up. *He* delivered the Psalm, but it was a blend of contributions, and it was voiced through Asaph and his brethren.

D.S.H. Should not we have great liberty in merging with one another in assembly service?

G.R.C. I am sure we should, as under the headship of Christ.

And then, as the book proceeds, Psalm 102 would help us as to feelings proper to the closing days. The Lord Himself has entered into intense sufferings resulting from God's governmental indignation and wrath against a faithless people, of whom He was, in wondrous grace, the representative. He entered into these in Gethsemane. While these sufferings do not, in themselves, go so far as atoning sufferings, yet they lead up to and merge into the sufferings of atonement. We need in our spirits to understand, in so far as this is possible, God's feelings about what has taken place in Christendom and the breakdown in which we have part. We need to enter into them as recognising how much the Lord has suffered because of man's (i.e. Israel's) unfaithfulness in the place of responsibility in which God set him; on account of which He was cut off in the midst of His days. But the Psalm goes on, "Thou art the same"; the blessed Person who, in grace, took all upon Himself is saluted by God in this way.

W.J.S. You quoted this Psalm yesterday, "I am become like the pelican of the wilderness . . . and am like a sparrow alone upon the house-top". How he felt the conditions, the spotless, perfect, holy Man, surrounded by so much that was dishonourable to God; how it pressed upon His spirit!

G.R.C. Yes, and feeling, too, the state of the nation of Israel, and how right it was that indignation and wrath should fall upon it and therefore upon Him as its representative, through boundless grace. Wrath came upon Him; He took it upon Himself as that nation's shepherd. It would affect our outlook on church history, I believe, to contemplate these sufferings. God as God cannot overlook what has happened, and if His grace is the same at the end of the dispensation as it was at the beginning, the righteous basis lies in these sufferings of the Christ which go deeper than the smiting of Israel's Shepherd, though linked with it, namely the sufferings of atonement itself. But what a comfort in these last days, to know that the Man who was cut off in the midst of His days is *the Same*—the unchanging God. He is unchanging in grace and faithfulness, in spite of our unfaithfulness.

H.A.H. Would all His ways with us as shown in Psalms 105 and 106 be in view of all the people saying "Amen"?

G.R.C. That is what is in mind, and I believe that should be ever before us in days of recovery. We should have nothing less in mind than that *all* the people should say "Amen". We may say, We shall never achieve it. True, *we* shall not achieve it, but it is going to be achieved. All the people *are going to say "Amen"* at the coming of the Lord. And the coming of the Lord is our hope in this book. His coming is imminent and we already anticipate it in our spirits; in fact, He already comes to us. And when the Lord actually comes, *all* the people *will* say "Amen". Not one will be absent, all will be in the matter, so that we are not cast down at all. But meantime our earnest prayer and desire is that they might say it *now*. All the saints are in our hearts; we yearn that all might be available, and our continual prayer should be, according to Psalm 106: 47, "Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us." This is not a limited "us"—it includes all who belong to the Lord Jesus. "Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations"—we long for *all* to be saved and *all* to be gathered—"to give thanks unto thy holy name and to triumph in thy praise".

G.H.S.P. Does this bear on the ministry which we have had as to forgiveness, and our attitude towards each other if assembly sorrows occur? I think you used the expression 'healing power' in your opening remarks.

G.R.C. That is very interesting. Psalm 103 is an ascription of praise to God in connection with His healing power; "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me bless His holy name." It implies that we are healed inwardly; otherwise all that is within us is not available. We would love to see all the saints healed inwardly so that all that is within them is available for God, as under the control of the Spirit. "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities"—these are assembly iniquities, as well as personal ones; God is ready to forgive us in respect of our part in all the sins of the dispensation, if we are repentant. "Who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from the pit, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thine old age with good things." We are living in the 'old age' as it were, of the dispensation, but He "satisfieth thine old age with good

things; thy youth is renewed like the eagle's". So that the dispensation ends up with full youthful energy in the power of the Spirit through the healing faithfulness of God, in spite of all the sins of the dispensation. And all is due to the fact that He is "the Same". He is all that He ever was to the church.

C.J.H.D. So that the two sides that you refer to, God never overlooking matters and yet coming out in the most wonderful grace, are brought together very closely in the last chapter of the Old Testament; the day is going to burn like an oven, and things are going to be dealt with, and yet the Sun of righteousness is going to arise to them that fear God's name, with healing in His wings.

G.R.C. Very good.

G.H.S.P. You referred in a previous reading to some of Paul's doxologies, and yesterday to Jude's doxology; might this book link with Peter's doxology, "the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, himself shall make perfect" (1 Pet. 4: 10)? Recovery would be connected with the God of all grace?

G.R.C. I think it would.

J.D. Why is "Hallelujah" used at the end of this book?

G.R.C. This book introduces the word "Hallelujah" because in days of recovery we become specially jubilant as we prove God in His faithfulness. It leads to a state of exuberance in Nehemiah, where the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off. And so the word "Hallelujah" begins to appear; it appears at the ends of Psalms 104, 105 and 106. In Psalm 103 we magnify God for His healing grace, and in Psalm 104 for His works in creation—the truth of creation having a great place in New Testament teaching and having special importance in this day of evolutionary theories. Psalm 105 rehearses His gracious acts to His people, and Psalm 106 the failures of the people and God's governmental dealings with them. Rehearsal belongs especially to the end of the dispensation, and adds to the wealth of praise that goes up at the end. It says, "And let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!"

J.P. Do you think Aquila and Priscilla are set out as wonderful examples of Psalm 103—"satisfieth thine old

age"—see note as to 'adornment'. I believe Priscilla means 'old age' and Aquila 'the eagle'—youth.

G.R.C. That is very interesting.

M.H.T. Is it striking that Hebrews begins with a quotation from Psalm 102 in connection with the title "the Same" (Heb. 1: 12) and ends with the reference to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", the first reference being an assertion of His Deity, and the second a beautiful allusion to His humanity.

G.R.C. Very good.

### READING (5)

Psalms 107: 1-9; 110: 1-4; 132: 1-9, 13-18; 133; 134;  
146: 1, 7-10; 147: 1, 2, 12-15; 149: 5, 6; 150.

G.R.C. We have been engaged with God relative to His purpose and the Man of His purpose in the first book of Psalms; with God as the One who gives effect to His purpose in the second book; and with the ways of God in love with His people that we might be brought experimentally into the gain of the truth and to a personal knowledge of Himself in the third book. We saw that the fourth book has to do with days of recovery and the experiences of the saints in such days. They are days when we cannot ignore the sins of the public profession and God's righteous government on account of them, and so in the prayer of Moses, the man of God (Ps. 90), he says, "We are consumed by thine anger." God as God must act in righteous government against those who completely disregard Him in connection with the position of favour and responsibility in which He has placed them in testimony; and we have all had part in the failure. According to Psalm 102 the Lord Jesus, in grace, has entered into sufferings in connection with Israel's failure as the vessel of light and testimony. He felt God's indignation and wrath in connection with Israel's sins, and was cut off in the midst of His days. It would affect us profoundly if we understood that character of the sufferings of the Christ, sufferings which, while distinguishable from those of

atonement, led up to, and merged in, the atoning sufferings of Psalm 22: 1-3. All blessing for man results from the atoning sufferings of Christ. They afford the righteous basis upon which the dispensation was established in pristine beauty, and also upon which God grants recovering grace and mercy in days such as ours. In such days we prove in a special way the blessedness of the word, "Thou art *the Same*". The One who was cut off in the midst of His days is "the Same", and He went into death that we might prove Him, and thus prove God, in that character—the one unchanging God, who never deviates from His purpose, but will carry things through to the end, whatever our failure may be. As we return to first principles we prove that He is the Same, the Same today as He was at Pentecost. In days of recovery we have to go back to first principles, and to the God who has been the dwelling-place of His people through all generations. We go back to Him in humble contrition and seek to provide conditions suitable to Him down here so that He may return to us. Of course, we know that in this the Spirit's day, He has never left His dwelling-place—but still there is the need for us to provide conditions suited to the presence of God down here. And therefore the prayer, "Let thy work appear to thy servants" and "the work of our hands establish thou it". It is a great thing to be on a line that God is establishing. There have been great gospel efforts, and we thank God for every preaching of Christ and what accrues from it in salvation to men, but He would have us engaged with constructive work that He can establish. In the last 150 years there has been a constructive work that has stood, a work that God has established, such as has not existed since Pentecost. True assembly features have become manifest, and that is the thing that we need to be concerned about. At the same time, we feel how many of our brethren are not available, but we never give them up in our affections. We look on to the Lord's coming when *all* the people *will* say "Amen". The great, final and complete recovery will be when the Lord Jesus comes, when every member of His body will function, and all the people say "Amen". But then in the light of that we hold all in our hearts and have nothing less as our ideal and objective than that all the people should say "Amen"

now. You say, You will never achieve it, and, no doubt, that is true, but we should have nothing less in our minds, and so this prayer, "Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise" (Ps. 106: 47), includes all saints; and the doxology closes, "Let all the people say Amen! Hallelujah!"

We come now to the fifth book, the great culmination; a book which, read in the light of Christianity, leads us into the expansiveness of the thoughts of God and the fulness of God Himself. Certain Psalms in the book prove that it was compiled in the order in which we have it, after the captivity. This shows that, in days of recovery, God intends that we should enter into the expanse of His thoughts in purpose, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with a view to our being filled to all the fulness of God. The book links thus with Ephesians.

Psalm 107 shows how God delivers souls out of all kinds of circumstances in order to bring them into the gain of His purpose. In the first section it is the redeemed, which includes us all; in the second it is those in captivity because of sin and failures; in the third it is fools—those who have come into difficulties through sheer folly (and who of us have not); and in the fourth, those that go down to the sea in ships, who come to their wits' end, and then God brings them into blessing. This introductory Psalm shows that, in whatever circumstances they may be found, God secures the objects of His purpose, to bring them into the great realm of praise.

Psalm 110 presents the greatness of Christ in His present position at the right hand of God and as the priest after the order of Melchisedec. Then the three Songs of Degrees we have read refer to the Ark being brought into its place, a great service performed by God's Anointed—and the results that flow from it. As a place is secured in the affections of the saints for Jehovah and the Ark of His strength, we enter into the whole scope and expanse of God's purpose—the length and breadth and depth and height to which Paul refers. This leads on to the culmination, the great 'Hallel' of the last five Psalms, which lead up in Psalm 150 to a crescendo of praise to God Himself in the greatness of His Being.

W.J.S. There is no heading to Psalm 107. It brings before the soul what Jehovah has done—"redeemed", "Gathered", "led", "satisfied", "Filled"—all His operations in days of recovery.

G.R.C. What a mighty operation redemption is; how it magnifies Jehovah, and every believer comes into that. Then what a mighty operation was breaking the gates of bronze and cutting asunder the bars of iron—we have proved it in our day. Who would have thought in the Middle Ages that any power could have overthrown the power of Rome? God used, in the main, one man, showing what God can do. He has not only operated spiritually in raising up men like Martin Luther, and later Mr. Darby, but He has entered into the political sphere at the same time and has set up systems of government in the Western World that have, in the main, been favourable to the testimony to this day, even as were the Persian dynasties of old.

C.J.H.D. Zechariah speaks of a time when all the earth was at rest, and of God using the four craftsmen to keep in control all that would oppose Him.

G.R.C. That is very interesting. God used the chariots also. He used the craftsmen on constructive lines, and the chariots and horses in Zechariah 6 on governmental lines. He says that the black horses had quieted His spirit in the north country. The literal application is that He sent forth Persia to deal with Babylon and to break the gates of bronze.

C.J.H.D. In chapter 2 a young man is introduced to Jerusalem, which is able to be measured, and it is going to be "inhabited as towns without walls".

N.F.A. "He led them forth by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation" (Ps. 107: 7). Is the great end in view that souls should be brought to the assembly?

G.R.C. Quite so, and that is what is in mind typically in Zechariah 2. "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein." It is remarkable that such a truth should be put before a young man to encourage him in view of what was outwardly a day of smallness. "For who hath despised the day of small things?" it says later (4: 10).

E.C.L. Do you think it is well to encourage young

people to have an outline of church history so that the thoughts of God might be enlarged and developed? I was thinking of the last verse of Psalm 107, "Whoso is wise, let him observe these things, and let them understand the loving-kindnesses of Jehovah."

G.R.C. That is important, and links with the idea of rehearsal in Psalms 105 and 106. It is a great thing to know how to rehearse God's ways in grace and in government, do you not think?

E.C.L. I feel it is important to take account of the way God has wrought all down the centuries to bring us to where we are now.

G.R.C. And Zechariah would be a great encouragement to young men. He was a young man with plenty of questions, and God takes account of such an one. He says to the angel, "Run, speak to this young man" (Zech. 2: 4). Think of God saying that to an angel because He saw a young man who was interested. Later Zechariah asks many questions and there is always someone available to answer, although sometimes he has to wait for an answer, and sometimes he is challenged, as when the angel says "Knowest thou not what these are?" and he says, "No, my lord." He does not mind admitting he does not know. A young man, in a day of recovery, should be full of questions, and if he is, God will see to it that he sees visions. Zechariah saw visions, and young men ought to see visions, in the sense in which I am speaking. They should have insight as to what God is doing spiritually, and in the sphere of government, at the present time. I am applying the idea of vision to insight into what God is doing, and that is what young men need. It will energise them so that they get to work and fully commit themselves to what is on hand. That was the effect on Zechariah. First he had questions, then God gave him visions, and then prophesied for the rest of the book. And if young men had their questions and received answers and spiritual visions, we should hear them in the meeting for ministry. They would prophesy to the end of their days.

A.B. Would he be greatly encouraged with the width of what is committed to him in contrast to Haggai who is given a brief word for the moment? I was thinking of the great scope of his prophecy.

G.R.C. There is a great range in the book. His vision in chapter 3 is in view of the day of recovery. Joshua the high priest is really representative of the people and it shows how God would take off the filthy garments and put on the festival robes. It is what God is doing for His people at the present time. The filthy garments are those stained with all the sins of Christendom, and God, in His grace, would relieve us of the burden of them, and put on us the festival robes. And then the next vision is the lampstand with seven lamps on it, which means that nothing has failed from the divine side, the Spirit is still here, and the full light of God is still available in the Spirit.

C.J.H.D. And the prophecy has a wonderful climax in regard of the name of Jehovah; it says at the end, "in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and his name one" (14:9). Does that look on to the final heading up of things in the glory of the Mediator as He will appear to the universe—God Himself will be there—"One Jehovah, and his name one"?

G.R.C. That is very fine. That is, no doubt, the culmination, and it is like the culmination of the Psalms, is it not? There is one Jehovah, every idol is displaced. He is known to us as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is "one Jehovah, and his name one".

A.W.P. Does Stephen represent in Christian days, we may say, an example of what you are saying? He was able to recount the movements of the testimony in Israel over a long period, and then comes to the point where *he* sees a vision—the heavens opened and the glory of God and Jesus standing—and speaks of it in such prophetic power that those who hear are cut to the heart.

G.R.C. Stephen is a very great example of what we are saying. He was a young man and he was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He was like one of the sons of oil which Zechariah sees: "These are the two sons of oil" (Zech. 4: 14); although they represent a company rather than individuals. There is the lampstand and the seven lamps, and then there are the two sons of oil, which involves exercise on the part of the saints to be in the matter, it seems to me. Stephen was one who was in the matter, he was full of the Holy Spirit.

H.A.H. Would that link on with Psalm 110, the dew of the Lord's youth, literally 'young man'?

G.R.C. That is good. I am glad you have moved us on to Psalm 110. I think that is a pivotal point in the Psalm, because verse 2 no doubt is future and we are wanting to apply the Psalm to the present, and I think we can give a present application to verse 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in holy splendour: from the womb of the morning shall come to thee the dew of thy youth", or the 'dew of thy young men'. The Lord has such available, the service is carried through by them.

G.W.B. Would you apply the first half of the last verse to the present time also? I was thinking of what the Lord receives at the supper.

G.R.C. So that, while the Melchisedec view of Christ does not emphasise His portion, as does the view of the king in Psalm 45, yet there is just this touch, that He drinks of the brook in the way. How precious that must be to Him as having the service of God in mind.

G.W.B. Do you think it is on the way to His rule in Zion, His public glory?

G.R.C. Quite so, and I was thinking of it now as on the way to the service of God. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." One would apply this verse to the way the saints become willing and available as the Lord comes amongst us, and secures complete sway in affection over us, so that it becomes the day of His power. It is not only the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart, according to the Song, but it becomes the day of His power, and we become available to Him in the service of God in holy splendour.

G.H.S.P. You have in mind, I judge, that as the Lord is refreshed and we find our part with Him, it really sets in motion the whole of the spiritual side of the service of God?

G.R.C. Exactly. Verse 3 thus becomes operative, the people willing in the day of His power in holy splendour. What a setting this is! Then it says, "from the womb of the morning"—no doubt an allusion to the death of Christ—"from the womb of the morning shall come to thee the dew of thy youth", or 'thy young men'; as we

sing sometimes, "Lord, around thee are thy brethren". The Lord has those available for the service of God.

J.L.W. Would you link it with John 20?

G.R.C. I would. I think John 20 in a particular way presents the tomb of Christ as the "womb of the morning". And Mary of Magdala is the hind of the morning, representing the assembly; and the Lord says, "Go to my brethren"—they are like the young men, "the dew of thy youth".

W.McK. Does the primary thought of God, namely sonship, underlie the service? I am thinking of the word, "Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exod. 4: 23). That is, he is to be set free from every power that would hold him. As regards Paul's ministry, did he not begin there?

G.R.C. He did. I am sure sonship is basic in Christianity. God says, "Let my son go, that he may serve me"; but where was His son to serve? He was to serve in the tabernacle, which is a type of the assembly. He was to serve later in the house that Solomon built, another type of the assembly. So that the sons of God serve in the assembly, not exactly in the family setting, although that underlies it, but the assembly is the *sphere* of service.

W.McK. And is that the view you are taking of the results of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, that out of it comes everything for God?

G.R.C. Yes, everything for God, whether we are viewed as His brethren or His body and His bride, or the sons of God.

M.H.T. Is what you are suggesting also to be illustrated in a well-known incident in David's history, when the three mighty men break through the host of the Philistines to fetch their king a flask of water from his native well and that action stimulated David to pour it out as a drink-offering to Jehovah?

G.R.C. That is good. The water was for David's refreshment, but he did not drink it himself. As you say, it stimulated him in the service of Jehovah.

N.F.A. Would you say a little more about sons not serving in the family but in the assembly?

G.R.C. I think that is how scripture presents it. The family is not exactly a service unit. Luke 15 does not

involve the service of God; it is the Father's joy in the son and the music and dancing and merriment. The joy and the intimacies of family life underlie assembly service, but assembly service proceeds under the headship of Christ in holy splendour. In all its parts it is worthy of God in His greatness. Even though we are addressing the Father, the manner, and the deportment of the saints and the whole setting of the service, as under the eye of heavenly intelligencies, is worthy of the great King.

N.F.A. The family side of things would give us liberty?

G.R.C. Quite so. The family is like divine home life. But the assembly is the great official vessel, as we might say, of service; and divine sovereignty enters into its composition, each having his divinely ordered place. As sons we are all firstborn, there is no distinction, but in the assembly each has his own place and fits into his own position, and we are dependent upon Christ as Head to give impulse and direction to the whole service, as King Solomon did in the type.

A.M. Would you say why the priesthood of Aaron is superseded by what is greater according to Hebrews 5?

G.R.C. Does not the Melchisedec type bring out the greatness of the Person who is priest? He is a priest after that order. The Psalm begins, "Jehovah said unto my Adon, sit at my right hand"—no one else has ever been invited to do that; and while it refers to the Lord in manhood, of course, yet no one other than a Divine Person could occupy such a position. Then in verse 5 it refers to Him as "*the Adonai at thy right hand*". That title refers to the lordship and authority that is His *in the right of His own Person*. The testimonial position is that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ; but we have to recognise that lordship is also His by personal right.

C.J.H.D. Hebrews 7 says, "Consider how great this personage was" (verse 4), but we can say of Christ, Consider how great His person is, can we not?

G.R.C. Yes, and that is what this Psalm would bring home to us. According to Hebrews He set Himself down at the right hand of the greatness on high.

G.W.B. Others are not associated with Him in this setting.

G.R.C. No one could be associated with Him in this

setting. We must remember, too, that the name Melchisedec means "king of righteousness". God never dissociates the idea of king and priest. It says in Hebrews 7: 2 that he was first king of righteousness, then king of Salem, which is king of peace. King of Salem links with Jerusalem, the place of peace. There is a strong assembly link in that way. He is King of righteousness, and Jerusalem is the city of righteousness; He is the King of peace, and Jerusalem means the place of peace. And then, being King of righteousness and King of peace, He is the priest of the Most High God, there is nothing to hinder Him in priestly service.

J.C.T. Is it your thought that as our affections receive a fresh impression of the greatness of Christ, we are brought into living conditions in which the service proceeds? He says in the Song, "Before I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people" (Song of Sol. 6: 12). That would prepare the way for the upward movement you have in mind?

G.R.C. I do believe that an appreciation of the greatness of the person of Christ greatly helps us to be willing in the day of His *power*, in holy splendour. Nothing gives us such a sense of the holy splendour of our own place before God as an impression of the unspeakable greatness of Christ.

W.H.K. Would it be out of place to refer to Psalm 96—it was read this morning but not touched upon—"Give unto Jehovah the glory of his name; bring an oblation and come into his courts; worship Jehovah in holy splendour"?

G.R.C. I would say that there you have the willing people.

I think now we ought to move on to the Songs of Degrees, because it is a question there of arriving at the full expanse of the thoughts of God in purpose, which centre in the Ark. I believe this is the only time the Ark is mentioned in the Psalms, although it is implied in such expressions as, "He sitteth between the cherubim" (Ps. 99: 1). But we see in Psalm 132 the relation between God's Anointed of Psalm 2, and the Ark. One of the great services of God's Anointed is to bring the Ark into its place in the affections of the saints, and, if the Ark is in its

place, we can look out on the length and breadth and depth and height of the whole sphere of God's purpose.

H.A.H. Is there a distinction between this Psalm and Psalm 48? In Psalm 48 the nations, and what is outward, is in view, but here it seems to be what is inward?

G.R.C. I think the second book of Psalms has the testimonial position in mind, both now and in the day of display, but I believe this book has in mind the saints arriving in their spirits, in the power of the Holy Spirit, at the full expanse of God's purpose.

J.L.W. Are you thinking of the expression "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" (Eph. 3: 17)? Is that the Ark in its right place?

G.R.C. That is what I understand. I believe the prayer in Ephesians 3 brings in both the Ark and God's Anointed. When the apostle prays "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts", I think he has in mind that the saints should, in their affections, apprehend Christ as the Centre of the Divine System, typified by the Ark; but when he says "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" he would include in his thoughts the active love of the Christ—King Solomon and his activities being the type. The Ark typifies Christ in the greatness of His Person as the centre of the system—a *fixed* position; "Every circle gathered round Him" as the hymn says. But Solomon is the *active* view of Christ—God's Anointed—whose love surpasses knowledge. His love moves in all directions, towards God, towards the assembly, towards every family, and He would put the Ark in its place, and every family in its place relative to it.

A.A.B. Would you be free to say a word as to the distinction between David bringing the Ark into the tent he had prepared and the final thought of Solomon bringing the Ark into the most holy place?

G.R.C. I think David bringing it up would link more with Colossians; the outward surroundings were not yet present in all their magnificence, and so what was stressed in David's day was the greatness of the Ark itself. The Colossian position, which is our actual position down here, as under the headship of Christ in localities, is a blessed one, because, although we are not yet actually in surroundings of infinite glory, we have the Ark; and in such

circumstances the greatness of the Ark specially engages the attention. I suppose there is no greater presentation of Christ than in Colossians 1. But I think Solomon links with Ephesians; he brings the Ark, typically, into its own eternal setting, a most glorious setting, and I think that is the idea of Ephesians 3. So that the Ark is not, in itself, so prominent as under David, because the whole setting is so glorious.

A.A.B. And that runs on to the thought of the glory of God filling the house of Jehovah?

G.R.C. Quite so. For the full thought, we have to link David and Solomon together, and I think that is in mind in Psalm 132. David never had less than the full thought before him because he desired to build Jehovah a house, but God said, "thy seed . . . shall build me a house" (1 Chron. 17: 11). "Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength" (Ps. 132: 8) would include the occasion when he brought it up and put it under curtains, but the house was really in view and, therefore, in 2 Chronicles 6: 41, Solomon actually quotes this, with slight enlargement, when he brings the Ark in. He says, "And now, arise, Jehovah Elohim, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, Jehovah Elohim, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in thy goodness." You will notice he adds the word "Elohim", which suggests the whole scene of glory as standing related to God in His supremacy and majesty—"Elohim".

E.C.L. Would that be the suggestion in worshipping at His footstool? Is that not an acknowledgement of all that God is? While we know Him, yet we acknowledge that there is much beyond what we may be permitted to know. The sense of this promotes worship.

G.R.C. That is very beautiful. While the Lord says, "We worship what we know" (John 4: 22), we always do it in the sense that there is that which is infinitely beyond us.

D.S.H. Why is it that in verse 9 there is the desire that the priests should be rightly clothed and for the saints to shout for joy? And then in verse 16, "*I will clothe her priests with salvation and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*"

G.R.C. It links somewhat with Ephesians, does it not? "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think" (3: 20). The answer was more than was asked for, and God alone can clothe us aright and make us great and strong in such a realm of glory as this. David said, "in thy hand it is to make all great and strong" (1 Chron. 29: 12).

A.W.P. Would you say more as to the distinction between the Ark and Solomon as types?

G.R.C. While activity characterises the Ark earlier—it goes before the people in Numbers 10 to find a resting place—its final setting suggests a fixed position. It typifies Christ as the Centre, the One who gives character to the whole realm of glory, and the One to whom God is fully committed. If the Ark is there, God is there, for He sits between the cherubim. And so it is, "Arise, Jehovah Elohim, into thy resting-place, *thou and the ark of thy strength.*" God comes in with the Ark—a wonderful thought. In Psalm 2 it is Jehovah and His Anointed; but Psalm 132, the link, is between Jehovah and the Ark of His strength. These are great thoughts in scripture—God and His Anointed, and God and the Ark of His strength. It is through the outshining and the operations in grace of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that God secures all that He had in mind in purpose. He has, in the Son, His Anointed, and that same Person is the Ark of His strength, the Centre of the whole realm of glory. The Father names the families, but the end in view in it all is that God in all His greatness and supremacy is enshrined in the universe of bliss in relation to the Ark of His strength.

G.H.S.P. Does the love which is peculiarly linked with the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit ensure conditions in which the greatness of God as God can be taken account of? Many of us would like some further help on the matter of God as God involving wider glories than God known in the Father. Does the Father's realm ensure the atmosphere of love in which the glories of God, which we have been enjoying in the Psalms, find expression?

G.R.C. That is what I thought. God was made known under the name 'Jehovah' to Israel; it was, for them, a name of relationship, and the value of that name, as of

every Old Testament name, remains. But for the fulfilment of what God had in mind it required operations of grace and relationships of love which involve the Incarnation and the declaration of the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and it is by way of these operations of grace and love and tenderness which characterise the activities of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the intimate relations into which they introduce us, that God, as God, gives effect to His great and eternal purpose to be the Centre of the universe, in relation to the One who is the Ark of His strength.

W.J.S. Does the glory of the Ark suggest a Divine Person in manhood? There was a moment, as the scripture suggests, when everything hung upon a creature, the anointed cherub. He fell, there was breakdown. Then everything hung upon the creature man in the garden, and he broke down. But is the glory of the Incarnation that God has effected all His thoughts and purposes in One in whom there could be no breakdown or failure? One great impression which will remain in my soul from these readings is the glory of the Incarnation.

G.R.C. That is very fine. Upon the Ark was the mercy-seat. Apart from the mercy-seat, the Ark would be alone, but through the mercy-seat it stands related to the whole universe of bliss. The cherubim overshadow it—the rights of God are fully maintained. The Ark is a remarkable type. One has come in upon whom God can wholly depend, and the universe, as held in relation to Him, becomes the scene of God's rest.

W.McK. Would Solomon, the more active type of Christ, indicate the Lord's personal part as Man in the service of God?

G.R.C. I think so. David says, as typical of the Lord, "in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22: 22). So that David and Solomon represent the more active side of things. The love of the Christ surpasses knowledge because of who He is in His Person, but it is an active love, and one of the greatest services He performs is to bring the ark into its place (see 2 Chron. 5: 7-10).

S.H. Would you help us as to the expression "to him be glory in the assembly *in Christ Jesus*"? Does what you are saying connect with that great thought, a creature

vessel employed eternally in response to God, but sustained in Christ Jesus?

G.R.C. No doubt it relates to the special status of the assembly.

F.G.S. Would you say that in 1 Corinthians 15 we see the Ark arising and scattering the enemies, according to Numbers 10, and in Ephesians 3 the Ark returning to its rest amongst the myriads, so to speak?

G.R.C. Quite so. We are engaged now with the Ark entering into its final rest, and the great fact that God is linked with the Ark. One would like to understand better the two great thoughts, Jehovah and His Anointed, and Jehovah and the Ark of His strength. They bring before us the One by whom and in whom God's purpose is effected.

S.E.W. Is that the thought in Psalm 132: 13 and 14?

G.R.C. Quite so. "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." The anointing in its kingly character, as bringing to pass the mind and will of God, is seen in Psalm 132, and in its priestly character, as the fragrant oil, in Psalm 133. The ark is in its place and the whole system is fragrant. God's king is also His priest and the anointing pervades the whole system "like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments".

A.A.B. "By the Spirit all pervading"—is that the thought?

G.R.C. Quite so. And then it is like the dew of Hermon. Hermon is a mountain in Lebanon three times as high as Zion, and the dew fell upon the mountains of Zion. The dew of Hermon may refer to what comes down from the Man who has ascended above all heavens. He has gone higher than we can go.

C.J.H.D. So it is the anticipation of heaven before we get there. I was wondering whether we could link the fifth book of Psalms with the end of the fifth book of Moses, and link both with Ephesians, remembering the words of our beloved leader in 1935, "What would heaven be without the saints in it!" Moses saw the tribes in the land before they were actually there.

G.R.C. Very good.

A.W.P. I would like to enquire the significance of Zion, especially in the Songs of Degrees. Does the idea of His mercy link with it?

G.R.C. I would think it refers to the accomplishment of all God's purposes on the basis of sovereign mercy.

And now we ought to proceed to the close of the book, and particularly the last Psalm.

W.T.E. Would you say why the Songs of Degrees are intertwined in the fifth book of Psalms? They seem to give a spiritual touch, ending up with *blessing* in each verse of Psalm 134; while in Psalm 150 it is *praise* in every verse. I thought blessing was a higher form of worship than praise.

G.R.C. Is not blessing that which rises from the soul? "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name", whereas praise is that which is expressed and which enters into testimony, because the high praises of God now and in the world to come, and, I suppose, even in eternity, will be a great testimony to the whole universe. Is that so?

W.T.E. Yes. I thought that the Songs of Degrees bring out a priestly atmosphere known only to the saints in an ascending way until we get to the thought of praising Jehovah.

G.H.S.P. Could we have your thoughts on this crescendo in the last Psalm?

G.R.C. The last five are "Hallelujah" Psalms, and they begin as it were at the bottom, showing the scope of praise to God, for in Psalm 146: 7-8 it says, "Jehovah looseth the prisoners; Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind". In Psalm 147 it is what He does for the assembly, "Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem; he gathereth the outcasts of Israel" (verse 2)—another touch as to days of recovery; and then in verses 13-15, "He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates" which would link very much with Nehemiah, "He hath blessed thy children within thee; He maketh peace in thy borders; He satisfieth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his oracles to the earth." Psalm 148 is occupied with creation, beginning with the angels, and shows that we need to take account of creation and of God as Creator, both as to this creation and new creation. The idea of creation enters much into the praise

of God. It is referred to in Romans, Corinthians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Peter and Revelation, as well as in the Gospels. Psalm 150 is the great climax of praise. J.N.D. points out that the name of relationship (Jehovah) does not occur in it; but that the names used—Jah and El—refer to God in His self-existence and Essence. Jah occurs in each of the last five Psalms. “Hallelujah” means “Praise ye Jah”. It is one of the most remarkable names of God, the name which most nearly conveys absoluteness. ‘Jehovah’ is more His continuous existence, the One who is, and who was and who is to come, the One who has had to do with time in order to effect His purpose. By this name He was specially known to Israel, but the knowledge of Him thus was to lead them to “Jah”, the essential Object of praise, and to the praise of “El”, that is, God in the greatness of His Being, in His sanctuary.

As in the gain of the full declaration of God, those who belong to the assembly are qualified, in a way that Israel never will be, to praise God thus. I know we have to be careful in such statements, for we cannot *apprehend* God in His Essence, nor can we approach Him where He dwells in unapproachable light; nevertheless, the way He has come out in declaration gives us some insight, some penetration, into the blessedness of what He is in His Essential Being. The Lord Jesus, the Son, is “the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance” (Heb. 1: 3) or “essential being” (see note f). J.T. wrote in 1943, “Scripture gives no definite line between what is revealed and what is not revealed. That is to say, what is revealed is not detached from the inscrutable.” Psalm 150 shows that the ultimate in praise is not the name of relationship, but the praise of God in His self-existence (Jah) and in His Essence (El—the Mighty), in His sanctuary. His sanctuary is, of course, the assembly, for the assembly is the shrine where God dwells. Yet to be in the sanctuary truly involves being in the nearest place in which the creature can be to God as God, a place where there is scope for the power of spiritual penetration. I do not want to suggest that we can penetrate the absolute—I trust the brethren will not misunderstand me—nevertheless, the One who dwells in light unapproachable has come out to us, and the

more we know of Him in the way He has been revealed, the more penetration we shall have into the blessedness of His Being. One link between what He is as revealed and what He is in His Essential Being is love—God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God and God in him. The God we know and worship cannot be compassed by a creed, nor by any human terms; He is infinitely beyond us. Yet, in the power of the Christian revelation we are set down in that most favoured, most holy place, to praise Him in His sanctuary. We praise Him, too, in the firmament of His power, as being ourselves the subjects of that power. We are in the firmament, which refers to the expanse or heaven, through His power, for He has “raised us up together and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2: 6). We praise Him in His mighty acts, and according to the abundance of His greatness.

G.H.S.P. Does it help to see that the service of praise is cumulative? None of the earlier touches of love are left behind; all are carried forward, are they not? I was thinking of what beloved J.T. said that the brethren of Christ, the assembly as united to Christ, and the sons associated with Him in the Father’s presence, are all to be carried forward in our minds, as it were, as we take on this final thought. The very knowledge that there *remains* something outside creature knowledge can only promote a spirit of worship.

G.R.C. I believe that if we entered in fulness, and the Spirit would help us, into our relationships with Christ as His brethren and as His bride, and into our place in sonship with the Father, we would have no difficulty about worshipping this blessed God, this great self-existent One, the One of whom it says the Lord Jesus is the expression of His “essential Being”. We are *in the presence* of such an One, though He is infinitely beyond our finite apprehension.

G.H.S.P. Yes, “filled even to all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3: 19).

G.R.C. Then every kind of instrument is brought in. First it is *where* we praise Him, in the sanctuary, in the firmament of His power, in His mighty acts; then *according to* the abundance of His greatness; then *how* we praise—

with every kind of instrument; and then finally, "Let everything that hath breath praise Jah. Hallelujah!"

F.J.D. Is that the glorious, eternal answer to Genesis 2: 7, God breathing into man's nostrils the breath of life, and "man became a living soul"?

G.R.C. That is very fine. "Let everything that hath breath"; everything that breathes, everything in which there is any life from God at all, is called upon to praise Him.

A.W.R. Does the doxology in Timothy help as to the character of praise to God in His Essence to which you refer, "The King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship, who only has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honour and eternal might. Amen."

G.R.C. I think so. It is one of the most profound of the doxologies. Are we saying what is right, Mr. W.?

H.W. I am going with it thoroughly, and enjoying it.

F.L.R. Is it good to see that the trumpet is used in Psalm 150? It is used previously in redemption's claims clearly uttered in the journeying of the camps and an alarm in the night, and now used again in the day of gladness when God comes in to His own?

G.R.C. Very good.

## GOD DWELLING

Address by Mr. G. R. COWELL

1 Timothy 6: 14-16. Isaiah 57: 15. Exodus 25: 8-9  
Psalm 132: 14. Revelation 21: 3.

Each passage we have read refers to God dwelling. According to the first passage He dwells in light unapproachable; it says of Him, "who only has immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honour and eternal might. Amen". Paul's heart is moved in worship to the God who dwells, in the self-sufficiency and greatness of His essential Being, in light unapproachable, entirely beyond the vision of the creature. It is remarkable that a worshipper should give expression to this, and I suppose only a worshipper could do so. Paul himself is the outstanding example of a worshipper in the New Testament. As he touches one truth after another, even while writing epistles, he breaks out in worship, showing what a constitutional worshipper he was. In Romans he has only to mention God as Creator, "the incorruptible God", as he calls Him, when his heart is moved to worship, and he says, "who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1: 23, 25). And so later in that epistle, as he touches one important truth after another, he gives expression to a doxology. It is such a man as that who gives us this statement as to God, "dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see". How did Paul know about this? It does not say here that God is dwelling in thick darkness. That was so in Old Testament times, as far as *men* were concerned; but God in His absoluteness dwells in *light*, although it is unapproachable. It magnifies God in our minds and thoughts to know that He dwells in light, although it is entirely beyond us. What a marvellous thing

it is that the God who dwells there, and ever will dwell there, should move out from that seclusion where no one has seen, nor could see, Him! He is there in His own self-sufficiency and self-existence. Why should He move out from that seclusion where He is beyond the knowledge of the creature in every way? I believe the answer lies in what has been revealed as to the nature of God, that God is love, and that He desired to be known and to be loved responsively by intelligent creatures. Indeed, He desired to dwell among such—that is marvellous—and the creature upon whom His heart was set, according to eternal purpose, was Man. We do not read that God ever dwelt, or will dwell, with angels. He dwells in light unapproachable, but when it speaks of His dwelling in other ways, as in the scriptures we have read, it speaks of Him dwelling with men. It is a marvellous thing that God has come out from the seclusion where He dwells in His own self-sufficiency, having in mind to dwell with men, because man is an order of being capable of taking in and responding intelligently to the disclosures of Himself that He had in mind to make; responding affectionately and in praise. And so, from the outset of God's creational activities, wisdom's delights were with the sons of men.

I suppose we might think of God moving out from His place of seclusion, in the first instance, to act in creation. We are told that all things were made by and for the Son and that He upholds all things by the word of His power. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse showeth the work of his hands" (Ps. 19: 1). The immortal, invisible, incorruptible God began to express Himself in creation, "Framed with wondrous skill". He manifested His eternal power and divinity, and made known to the man He had made, His perfect goodness and beneficence in surrounding him with every tree that was pleasant to the eyes and good for food, and by putting the tree of life in the midst of the garden, showing that His mind for man was life. He made Himself known thus as the blessed God, and that is why Paul, when he speaks of Him in Romans as the Creator, says, "Who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1: 25). Do we worship God, dear brethren, sufficiently as Creator? Paul says men have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an

image of corruptible man, and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles”, and also says that they “honoured and served the creature more than him who had created it, who is blessed for ever”. God has proved in creation that He is blessed for ever, and in framing the creation with wondrous skill He had in mind from the very outset the bringing in of Christ as the Centre—“all things have been created by him and for him” (Col. 1: 16). If we do not understand that we do not understand the purpose of the creation. Further, it says that He is before all. And so in Romans 9, when Paul says “of whom [i.e. of Israel], as according to flesh, is the Christ”, he immediately adds, in a spirit of worship, “who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 9: 5). Are you a worshipper of Christ? No mere man, no one, indeed, but a Person of the God-head, could be the Christ. In the Incarnation God was bringing in the Person who is to be the Centre of the vast creation, the One by whom and for whom all things were made. The coming in of Christ has laid the basis for God to dwell eternally with men.

To proceed to our second scripture, Isaiah says, “For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57: 15). What a touching passage that is! God could speak in this way because Christ was coming in. If He could dwell in past dispensations with those who were of a contrite and humble spirit it was because Christ was to come and accomplish the work of redemption. Their faith looked on to Christ. From Abel onwards—indeed, from Adam onwards, faith ever looked on to Christ. God was going to set Him forth a mercy-seat. He could never be the Centre of the vast creation, sin having come in, unless He were a mercy-seat. God has now set forth Christ Jesus a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, and the value of His work has its effect backwards as well as forwards. As it says in Romans, “For the showing forth of his righteousness in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; for the showing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be

just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Rom. 3: 25-26). It is a wonderful thing that, although God had in mind to dwell with men, the fulfilment of it awaited redemption; there is no suggestion of God dwelling with man in innocence. I do not think man in innocence could have provided suitable conditions for this high and lofty One to dwell. Man in innocence had not power nor capacity to take in His thoughts and to be responsive to Him. It is on the basis of redemption that He says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." How wonderful that this glorious God is prepared to dwell with each one of us here! And the condition is that we should be of a contrite and humble spirit. He dwells with none else. In John 14, in the light of the full Christian revelation, the Lord says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (verse 23). This is how God dwells with an individual in our dispensation. A man of a humble and contrite spirit would be a man who loves Jesus and keeps His word. He has no confidence in himself, he has learned to judge himself, but he loves Jesus and keeps His word. And of such an one the Lord Jesus says, "my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him".

The God who dwells in unapproachable light has now been fully declared. He was made known in a partial way to His people of old; Moses, it says, could see His back parts when he saw His glory, but we are privileged, as it were, to see Him face to face in Jesus. We behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. God has moved out in such a manner that a Person of the Godhead has come into manhood, and He is the image of the invisible God. The God whom no man hath seen nor is able to see has come into full expression. It says of the Lord Jesus, the Son, that He is "the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his substance", or essential Being (Heb. 1: 13, see footnote). It does not mean that a creature could compass all that has been expressed, but it does mean that everything that men, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can apprehend as to God is now in full expression. I am certain that more has been expressed than we shall

ever take in or could take in, for God has come out so completely in the Son. Nevertheless, what a vast range there is that we *can* take in by the Spirit. A Person of the Godhead has come into manhood, and He is the image of the invisible God. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit has come to take up His abode with us and to dwell in us, giving us power to take in what has been expressed in so far as it is possible for the creature to do so. What favoured persons we are! The coming out of God from the seclusion of unapproachable light involves the declaration of His name, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and in John 14: 23 the Lord Jesus shows how the gain of that is available for one man. Earlier He says of the Holy Spirit, "He abides with you, and shall be *in* you" (John 14: 17). He is referring to the company there, of course. The declaration of God was in view of dwelling, first of all on the part of the Spirit—"He abides with you, and shall be *in* you". Then He says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him"—the Father and the Son—"and make our abode with him." The Spirit is already there, as we may say, but the Father and the Son will also come to him and make Their abode with him. That is a most amazing statement, and the only explanation of it is love. "If any one love me"—that is, the responsive love which God is seeking—"if any one love me, he will keep my word." If we love, we shall provide suitable conditions for God to dwell. If the God who dwells in unapproachable light is to dwell among men it must be on His own terms, in accordance with His holiness. To lay the basis for it Jesus has been into death. In coming out to dwell with men God surrenders nothing of what is due to Him in His nature and His attributes. But "if any one love me he will keep my word"; he will provide the conditions and "my Father will love him, and *we* will come to him and make our abode with him". How much is available, beloved brethren, to one who is of a contrite and humble spirit in the present day. Such a person will love the Lord Jesus and keep His word, and come in for the infinite blessing, not only of the Spirit dwelling in him, but of the Father and the Son coming to him and making Their abode with him. All that comes about because God

is love, and He comes to such a person for His own satisfaction. The Father, the Son and the Spirit find satisfaction in abiding with one such person. I would say again that it is because God is love that He has come out in declaration and revelation; love so looks for response, so requires an answer, that the Father, the Son and the Spirit will come down, as it were, to one person for Their own satisfaction.

But in Exodus 25 Jehovah speaks of a corporate dwelling-place. He appeals to those whose heart prompts them. I need not say that those who are of a contrite and humble spirit will be amongst these willing-hearted ones. And He says, "They shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shall show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the utensils thereof, even so shall ye make it." What a call this is for responsive love on our part! God would have, we may say, a corporate or collective dwelling. He will come down to abide with one person, but that is not the full thought of God. He has a pattern before Him, and that pattern involves the tabernacle, which is typical of the assembly. It involves the saints set together as one body in Christ, and *members one of another*, according to Romans 12; set together as one body *in relation to the Holy Spirit*, according to 1 Corinthians; set together as Christ's body *in relation to Christ as head*, according to Colossians; and with *the Christ enshrined in their hearts*, according to Ephesians. That is the pattern, and if we are to know God dwelling, things must be according to the pattern. Alas, the dwelling of God is very little known in Christendom. Where there is a humble and contrite spirit God will dwell with that man; but the dwelling of God in a collective way is very little known, if at all, in Christendom. Yet to know the dwelling of God in a collective way is far greater than anything we could enjoy as individuals. It is worth going in for. Paul has given us the pattern. The pattern is clearly laid down in scripture—the tabernacle itself is typical of the pattern—but Paul's ministry helps us to understand the typical teaching, and if you follow the epistles—Romans, Corinthians, Colossians and Ephesians—you find the pattern. Let us go in for these things, dear brethren. The blessed God has come

out from the seclusion where He dwells in light unapproachable, desiring to dwell with men; not with angels, but with men. He has come out in a way calculated to touch and win our affections. We have been reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, in order that there might be willing-heartedness. In fact He has put us in the place of sons: He said, "Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exod. 4: 23). We have sung:

*But our God, how great Thy yearning  
To have sons who love.*

God sent forth His Son that we might receive sonship; God is seeking sons who love. He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts and the answer of love in sonship is seen in the willing-hearted. "Let my son go, that he may serve me." How are we going to serve? This was the first great act of service—the willing-hearted bring all the material for God's dwelling-place. We bring ourselves, we hold ourselves available, and all that we have for the dwelling-place of God. We are prepared to be governed by the pattern. It costs something to accept the truth of Romans, Corinthians, Colossians and Ephesians. It means parting company with ourselves; it means judging our old man and having done with him. But it is well worth while: what great compensation even for us! For as we are prepared to fit together and form this habitation of God—"a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them"—we experience the blessedness of God dwelling among His people, here and now. God dwells with us in the most intimate conditions. We know the Father's love and glory, we know the love of the Christ which surpasseth knowledge, we know the love and service of the Spirit. How well worth while to provide conditions where the Spirit can be completely free, where the Lord Jesus has His place amongst us, and where the Father's love and glory shine upon us. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." But what lies behind the whole matter is that God is love. It is God coming out to seek an answer which only men as secured in the place of sonship can give; no other order of being could give God the response which He is seeking. It is amongst *men* that He

would dwell, not waiting until the eternal state, but dwelling with us here in these mixed conditions, provided we are prepared to be governed by the pattern. May the Lord encourage our hearts in this.

I pass on now to Psalm 132, where it says as to Zion, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (verse 14). This Psalm is typical of that which is wider in scope than God's present dwelling. It is something we can enter into now in our spirits, but it really takes in the full purpose of God, brought to pass typically under Solomon, when he said, "And now, arise, Jehovah Elohim, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy strength" (2 Chron. 6: 41). God is moving on to the fulfilment of His purpose. His Christ will bring all to pass—He has been anointed to that end. The time is shortly coming when Jehovah and the Ark of His strength will be the centre of a universe of bliss. Every family secured from every dispensation will find their centre in God and the Ark of His strength—"every circle gathered round Him". And that is God's rest for ever. There He will dwell, for He has desired it. Nothing less was in His mind in coming out from the seclusion of His dwelling in light unapproachable, He had in mind, in purpose, a universe of bliss where every family would find its centre in Himself and the Ark of His strength. Then God's delight will be complete, His glory will be fully displayed, the purpose for which He has come out from the seclusion of light unapproachable will be fully brought to pass. This is also the hope before our hearts, beloved brethren. We are assured of it all coming to pass, for all is established in Christ, and the Spirit is here that we might enter into it now in our spirits. If we are prepared, in our mixed conditions and outward feebleness down here, to provide tabernacle conditions according to Exodus, we shall, as we come together, prove the presence of God, and the Holy Spirit will lead us, in our spirits, into the realm of God's completed purpose. God calls the things that be not as being; His completed purpose is present to Him, and the Spirit of God can make it present to us. And that is the purport of the apostle's prayer in the third of Ephesians, that God's completed purpose might be a present reality to the saints now, that they might be in it

in power by the Spirit. You may say, 'How could it be?' The answer is, "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think . . . to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" (Eph. 3: 21). The praises that God is receiving depend, at the present time, on our being carried in our spirits, in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the present enjoyment of the full scope of the purpose of God, so that we arrive at finality with God. That was the idea, typically, in the feasts of old. The feast of tabernacles was the great climax typifying the time when heaven and earth will be filled with families, the harvest of every dispensation gathered in. The feasts imply that we are to arrive at it *now*, not simply for our own satisfaction, but that God might get adequate praise. And He is able to do more than we ask or think. How feebly we yet understand what the presence of God means! If only we would make way for Him, if only we would provide conditions for Him! God is love, and He wants to be with us and to let us know in full measure the love that is in His heart, and to draw out in full measure response from our hearts. If only we provided conditions for Him to be with us unreservedly, what unspeakable blessing we should enjoy in our spirits. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think; He is able to make all great and strong.

I trust what I am saying will stimulate our hearts to go in for these things, because we can never reach in our spirits the purpose of God in its completeness if we are not prepared to face the exercise of providing the suitable dwelling conditions required down here, first individually, as being of a humble and contrite spirit, and then collectively in our localities, as set together bodywise and assembly-wise. We shall never touch the great abstract realities that subsist in the mind of God unless there is a concrete answer to His mind down here, so that He can be with us in power. It is worth going in for, dear brethren. We have no idea yet, I am sure, of what we can be led into as we give God His place, so that God is really among us of a truth.

I pass on now to the final scripture in Revelation. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them." I read this to bring home to us the

unique place the assembly has in connection with God dwelling. While, in one sense, the whole universe of bliss becomes the dwelling-place of God, there is one vessel which is called "the tabernacle of God"; there is one company who know His immediate presence. I believe it is called the tabernacle of God to stress the intimacy, the intimate affections, that are known inside. John has an external view here; but his ministry in his gospel and elsewhere gives us an idea of what is inside, what the inner life of the tabernacle of God is, the unspeakable nearness in which the creature is to God as forming part of His tabernacle. It is the most blissful place the creature will ever know. God Himself is there. You say, the God who dwells in light unapproachable? Yes, God Himself. Not *as* dwelling in light unapproachable; nevertheless, God Himself is there. The Father is there; His love and glory fill the tabernacle. The Son is there; the glory of God shines in Him, the Father's love is expressed in Him, His love supports the whole system—the love of the Christ. The Spirit is there, all-pervading, permeating inwardly, filling in completeness every soul, every mind, every heart. We cannot find words to express the nearness to God of those who form this tabernacle. They truly dwell in God, and God in them. We are to touch it in our spirits now, as understanding John's ministry. God has come out from that secluded dwelling in light unapproachable that He might have a full answer, an answer in the whole universe, but, in a particular way an answer in this vessel, which is called His tabernacle. In this God finds the satisfaction that He has sought; He dwells with men in the most intimate relations.

*'Twas Thy thought in revelation  
To present to men  
Secrets of Thine own affections,  
Theirs to win.*

And that is what marks those who dwell in this tabernacle; they know the secrets of God's affections, and their affections are won. They dwell in God through all eternity, and God dwells in them. Other families know His presence, because He is in this tabernacle, but they do not know it

in the same direct way as those who form the tabernacle. What a marvellous thing that grace has called us to form part of this vessel, which is called in its eternal setting the tabernacle of God! Attention is drawn to it; a loud voice out of heaven says, "Behold!" evidently because it is a matter of the utmost importance. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." Marvellous thing! God has achieved His end in coming out! May the Lord help us with regard to it, for His name's sake.