

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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DIVINE APPEARINGS

Colossians 1: 17-20; Ephesians 3: 14 -21; Revelation 21: 1-6

C.R.B. The Lord would no doubt help us to gather up from the experiences we have had as being together in relation to the Supper and the service of God, and to relate that to what He may have in mind to say to us as to what has been occupying us as to the way that He was pleased to appear to certain persons in a distinctive way. When Paul refers to the way the Lord had appeared to him, he says it was "last of all, as to an abortion, he appeared to me also", 1 Cor 11:5-8. The references to Christ appearing to the twelve and to all the apostles would seem to be related to the Lord's position as ascended. They would have that bearing. But the appearing to Paul as to the last of all is clearly from Christ in glory, and would bring a special touch of richness and greatness into what was committed to Paul in relation to the opening up of the truth of the preciousness of the assembly to Christ, and of the whole service of God as related to sonship.

Paul, as having been conscious that it was "last of all" that the appearing was made to him, would be especially delighting to draw attention to Christ as having the first place - first of all. No doubt the Lord's first breaking in to Saul of Tarsus: "Why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4 in relation to His own personal name of Jesus would have left an abiding impression upon Paul which would have grown by way of experience as to the way that Christ loved the assembly.

So that Paul's love for the assembly and our love for the assembly would be directly related to the consciousness of Christ's love for the assembly. Where we read in Ephesians would link on with the hymn that we have sung (No 325) as to the way that we are brought into direct relationship with the Father. The result is glory to God.

The section in Revelation 21 would remind us in a special way of the pleasure that God Himself has in what He has secured for Himself eternally. But the way into these things is to be enlarged in our appreciation and love for Christ as the One who in His own greatness is so fully entitled to the first place in all things.

C.F.D. Do you think Paul saying "For me to live is Christ", Phil 1: 21, would show the extent to which Christ had the first place in his life? And he was really taking character from the Man that had that place in his affections.

C.R.B. And to be able to say that, when he was in the limitations of prison conditions, would show that his occupation with Christ personally caused him to rise above every possible hindrance and difficulty to be occupied with Christ where He is.

E.T.M. I wondered whether the way he speaks of this appearing would help us to appreciate what is cumulative of the wealth of the appearances of Christ: "he appeared to me also". He would be thinking of what is cumulative. There is a great wealth of it in these appearances. It seems to me that one great feature of it would be the help that the Spirit would give us to treasure the immensity of wealth that these appearances occasion in relation to Christ. So that "last of all" would mean that he had the whole thing summed up in its cumulative wealth, when he says, "he appeared to me also." It helps us as to what we were saying as to Christianity, that it is extraordinary.

C.R.B. So that it would show, amongst other things, the wisdom of Christ as Head. He was preparing, you might say, for the great unfolding of the truth under Paul, but He appeared to other persons first. The working out of matters under the hand of Christ often is by way of extension. It is not because divine Persons are not able to arrive quickly at what They have in mind, but They choose to move in a certain way, and we find that the result is all the greater and all the more glorious.

A.B.P. Could you say something about the evident humility that marked Paul in not exactly bringing himself personally into the line of those who were appeared to, but as a forerunner of Israel being recovered. Is that humility on his part, or is it intended that the glad tidings should not only relate us to the Man in the glory, but what that Man will do to consummate the purposes of God?

C.R.B. You are thinking of the reference to "as to an abortion" as one born out of due time?

A.B.P. Yes.

C.R.B. We need to hold in our hearts the glory that Christ has as the Saviour of the world - the vast extent of what the true Joseph is going to secure. It is when the deliverer comes out of Zion that all Israel is going to be saved, but we would hold God's thoughts in relation to His ancient people now.

A.B.P. I was connecting it in my thoughts with the Lord's own words in John 17, where you get the height and glory of His place amongst His own. He refers to the fact that the Father had given Him authority over all flesh. But then He concentrates on those who are immediately in His own thoughts. It seems to carry the suggestion of the millennial day of glory into the occasion, does it not?

C.R.B. Would that be connected in your mind with what we had in our hymn as to the many families? The assembly as being so near to Christ and to God is divinely formed to be able to appreciate in some measure what the many families mean to God.

A.B.P. And is it not really vital that we should have that in our minds because we are so close to the end of the present dispensation? And all that is going to transpire to sum things up in view of the introduction of the millennial day must be in the divine mind very prominently. The Lord will have us share with Him in His prospect.

C.R.B. I think so. It would be important, of course, to remember that there is only one family that is being gathered at the present time. God is working only in relation to the assembly. But as we think of the many families, those already secured and those that will be secured after the assembly has been taken, it would all be part of the vast sphere of things which can be named of the Father as having some impress of Christ upon them.

H.W.K. The true value of what Paul received from the Lord was known to Paul, was it not? And Paul would share that with others;

that is, his intelligence in the mystery was to be understood by others.

C.R.B. I think so. When he speaks of the appearing in Corinthians, he says that he was the least of the apostles and not fit to be called apostle. He does not say that he had persecuted the saints or those who were of the way, as disciples of Jesus; he said "because I have persecuted the assembly of God", 1 Cor 15: 9. He had arrived at it in his own experience that the persons, of whom the Lord Jesus could say 'they are Me', were the assembly of God, and the spirit of reverence is in all Paul's writings. He would give us a very dignified understanding of what the assembly of God means to God.

J.N.C. "Purchased with the blood of His own." That is a unique touch and a very affecting one: "The assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", Acts 20: 28.

C.R.B. Would that be intended to affect the elders of Ephesus so that they took on something of Paul's understanding of divine affections in relation to the assembly of God as represented in the locality?

J.N.C. I am sure he had that in mind, and you can see how valuable that would be. That would be in the Spirit's hands, would you say, as a valuable way in which what is going on above can be fully communicated and appreciated here?

C.R.B. We have often been reminded that you cannot make too much of the assembly because, in making much of the assembly, you are making much of Christ. The very experiences we have had today in relation to the Supper, and all that entered into it in each gathering where we have been, would help us to value the assembly more and to seek to move in a way which will be for the prosperity of the brethren in every locality.

A.B.P. Is the title "assembly of God" masculine?

C.R.B. That is how I understand it, and it is particularly connected with the working out of responsibility in Corinth and every local setting.

A.B.P. And eternally in sonship?

C.R.B. Yes. You have in mind that the assembly femininely is for the heart of Christ. It is not a question of feminine response assembly-wise to God or to the Father; it is the response of sons, but persons who constitute the assembly.

A.B.P. I thought in that way that "glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus" seems to be related to sonship.

C.R.B. Yes, I think so. It is remarkable that the title 'assembly of God' is brought in in Corinth and in Acts 20. So the working out of things has a dignified setting, but response to God is in the liberty of sonship.

G.H. In the letter to the Corinthians, it says "to the assembly of God which is in Corinth", 1 Cor 1: 2; would it also bring out God's rights?

C.R.B. Yes. The more we are helped to enjoy the privileges connected with the inside position, the more we would seek grace to represent God rightly, not claiming to be the assembly of God, but seeking to represent God in a way which will mean that God will have something in each locality where the saints are seeking to walk in the light of the assembly, which, in character, is rightly related to the thought of the assembly of God.

J.A.P. I would like to get clear on this point about the assembly of God being masculine. You guarded that by saying that the thought of sons of God is masculine, but I thought that generally the assembly is a feminine thought, even in the care of matters locally.

For instance Paul says to Corinth "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ", 2 Cor 11: 2. Would not that be the local assembly?

C.R.B. That is in the setting of being related to Christ. But Mr Taylor sen taught us that "the assembly of God which is in Corinth" is a masculine setting (N.S. Vol. 67, p.742); it refers to the way the saints would be helped to represent God in Corinth. When you

speaking of the assembly as related to Christ, that is the feminine side. Response to God or to the Father would be from sons.

J.A.P. It was quite guarded about the matter of sons, but I wanted to be clear in my own mind, if we can come down to practical matters, that if the local brethren in the light of the assembly are caring for matters in this city, how do you view the brethren in that light?

C.R.B. I think that as the saints are seeking to care for the interests of Christ they would be related to the Lord as Head. But the side of the assembly of God seems to bring in a very dignified view of the way that God would be represented in the locality. We may have to view it somewhat abstractly at the moment, and yet what is abstract can be real. But when Paul wrote to Corinth, the gathering of persons.

J.A.P. Is what you are stressing "God is indeed amongst you" chap 14: 25?

C.R.B. It would bear on that. It is the area of things where God Himself is free to speak.

A.B.P. Is it that the assembly fills out, when it is normal, what the Sanhedrim failed to do? It is the dignified body of those who cherish and are regulated by the thoughts of God, is it not ?

C.R.B. That is an affecting link, because it was the Sanhedrim that condemned the Lord to death. It is the assembly of God that makes way for the Son of God.

A.B.P. Do you think that, to balance this out, we might refer to Proverbs 31? During the time of absence of the husband, the wife cares for his interests.

C.R.B. That is helpful. We would not overstress the side of the responsibility and the masculine side, yet it is there and it needs to be treasured in our hearts. But Mr McCallum could help us on this.

S.McC. I think that the administrative side emphasises the masculine side. The assembly as with Him femininely in the

administrative side, as in Ephesians, is one thing, but generally, in Corinth, the assembly of God would represent the masculine side.

C.R.B. As we hold all these impressions in balance they would magnify to us the richness of what the Lord chose sovereignly to entrust to Paul as the one who was going to complete the word of God.

S.E.H. I was going to inquire about what we were saying earlier that responding to God would be in sonship and would be a masculine thought. Some of our hymns, especially No 370, for example, speak about the assembly in a feminine sense, with Christ, praising God. How do we understand that, as coming before God with Christ, as His bride?

C.R.B. It is good to get help on these holy matters. I think the references to the assembly in those settings brings out the richness of her relations with Christ. When you think of Christ in the midst of the assembly singing praises (Heb 2: 12), that refers to persons who form the assembly in relation to Christ. Those persons, as taking part in response to the Father and to God, do so as in the liberty of sonship. We were speaking yesterday of the three great matters that beloved Mr Taylor sen brought out that go through into eternity, and it is wise to be confirmed in these things because we might have thought otherwise at one time. The assembly in relation to Christ, the brethren, and sons, are three matters which go through into eternity. The working out of them, of course, we hold together, and yet they are distinct.

E.B. The thought of the Son Himself being placed in subjection is always masculine. There is never any thought of the feminine in that is there? But the assembly would be with Him. I was thinking of what you were saying about the assembly being a masculine thought in relation to God. I understand what it is in relation to administration, but I was wondering about the thought of the assembly being with Christ when He is placed in subjection. He never leaves the assembly, does He ?

C.R.B. What Mr McCallum was referring to as God's great primary thoughts would include God's thoughts in relation to man. The working out of that as to man and woman involves Christ and the assembly.

B.T. "The assembly of the firstborn," in Heb 12:23, would also be masculine, would it not?

C.R.B. Yes. That would be a dignified reference to those who take character from the One who is the firstborn.

C.F.D. So can we just carry in our minds the thought that what is united to Christ in a feminine way is made up of persons, of which we form part? In the way of extension, those same persons, in relation to the Father, respond to Him as sons, and likewise God.

So we get the thought of God and men, do we not? But it is the same personnel viewed from a different viewpoint.

C.R.B. Yes, and whilst we get help on these matters as seeking to inquire into them dependently in the temple, the confirmation of them is related to experience in the service of God.

D.T.H. Is this all part of the purpose of God? We have the thought that God purposed to have men dwelling with Him, God tabernacling with men, but then He also purposed, did He not, that Christ should have a bride?

C.R.B. That is very helpful, because it brings out the greatness of what has been made known in these days. It was hidden throughout the ages in God, and yet God patiently pursued His ways with men until the time came when this wonderful mystery should be revealed.

S.D.K.R. Is it right then that feminine response in eternity would be seen in relation to the assembly to Christ?

C.R.B. That is how I understand it.

S.D.K.R. That was made clear by Mr Taylor sen. There were some who thought of feminine response to God, but he said that that was not right.

C.R.B. Yes. Some of the proposed hymns for the 1951 revision had to be adjusted as a result of what came out in New York with Mr Taylor sen at that time. Is that right, Mr Parker?

A.B.P. That is right.

A.S.M. In relation to God's thoughts, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, so that Christ has the assembly now.

C.R.B. It is a wonderful matter, that the Spirit works in relation to the saints to form them in true assembly affection for Christ. So that He has one as in Proverbs 31: "The heart of her husband confideth in her".

C.S.E. When the apostle speaks of the appearing to himself, he says, "last of all". Would there be a touch of the grace that was extended to him? In another place he speaks of himself as the chief of sinners. He knows how to place himself rightly. Do you think at is the mark of the Spirit?

C.R.B. The more we are helped of the Spirit to experience in any measure the greatness of these wonderful matters, the more we will be deepened in our understanding of the greatness of the mercy of God and of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus.

L.MacF. The reference in Acts 20 is in relation to his departure. Would you say something as to that?

C.R.B. He was seeking to give those elders at Ephesus something of the impression he had as to the way that God valued the assembly - as our brother was saying 'purchased with the blood of His own' - so that they would seek to care for the assembly with the genuine feeling that marks persons who love Christ and who love God.

G.D.W. In that reference to the assembly of God in that scripture, he says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God", Acts 20:27. Would this be the setting in which we would take up responsible matters of the assembly?

C.R.B. Yes. In going over matters with the elders of Ephesus, obviously Paul had something especially in his heart; he had called

them over to him. His closing reference to the words of the Lord Jesus "that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive", Acts 20: 35, would help us to be committed in a very real and deep way to the interests of the local assembly. How often we have pondered over the way that Mr Taylor sen committed himself to the interests of the local assembly. And that is to mark us all.

G.D.W. I have wondered sometimes why he says, "I have not shrunk", Acts 20:27. I think we are hesitant sometimes to come back to the primary thoughts as to this relationship and what the assembly of God really means. It would give a different colour to the way we take up matters.

C.R.B. Well, it would mean that we would hold everything in this world very lightly, and we would always be on the alert to defend the home front.

B.T. A locality cannot impose a wrong judgment on the assembly universally, can it?

C.R.B. Open up what you have in mind.

B.T. You might say, 'It is the assembly of God in this place, and we have done so and so here, and that is what it is.' But if it is wrong, it cannot be imposed - you cannot divorce the locality from what is universal.

C.R.B. No. That is very important. We need to distinguish, as we have been instructed. If brethren in a place, in the light of the assembly, arrive at a judgment regarding a matter arising in the place, then we would honour that, unless it can be established that that judgment cannot be justified according to the truth and according to facts. But if brethren in a place arrive at a judgment of a matter *outside* of their own borders, that can never be regarded as binding on other local assemblies. That comes in frequently in Mr Taylor's ministry. It is a current issue, I think, that the rights of Christ in the assembly need to be honoured.

S.McC. Mr Taylor sen was very simple in some of the answers he gave. I remember being in a three-day occasion with him when a

brother said, 'Do you always believe that an assembly judgment is right?' There was a little pause, and then he looked at the brother and said, 'Not if it is wrong.' That was very simple.

C.R.B. Just so. It is sometimes a bit more testing to arrive at that in our experience, but the truth of that is vital.

S.McC. *Prima facie*, we accept an assembly judgment, but as Mr Taylor pointed out in regard to this very city, where they had a crisis, if priestly investigation shows by facts that the judgment was not right, then it is not right. That happened in regard to a matter in Plainfield, and Westfield. It was Plainfield where a brother was withdrawn from, and it was thought it was not right. A number of others had the thought that it was not right to interfere with the judgment. The brother was restored, (although he went out of fellowship again eventually) but it was said that the facts did not support the judgment in withdrawing from the brother. (See J.T. N.S. Vol. 59, p.83-99; Vol. 56, 206-243).

A.S.M. It reminds me of what is said in relation to "last of all". I think Mr Taylor sen brought out that Paul has the last word in relation to every matter in relation to the assembly.

C.R.B. He completed the word of God. But in relation to what Mr McCallum was saying, that would always leave scope for priestly inquiry as to any judgment in any place, because if we arrive at a judgment in a place, we ought to be able to justify it and be quite ready to explain the facts to any priestly inquirer.

S.McC. What you are saying is very important because there was one city in Ohio where the brethren to protect, according to their thinking, a brother in their midst in a financial matter, had an assembly meeting and gave out that they judged the person to be righteous. What was being said was wrong. And they would have made that judgment, which was wrong, legal and binding on all the assemblies. Mr Taylor sen rose up very strongly against that, with the result that that assembly was neither received from, nor commended to, for a number of years. (See J.T. Letters Vol 2, p.94-98).

A.B.P. Do you not think in relation to these matters, the test to us is when we have the feeling that a judgment that has been arrived at is not right we are liable to discredit the assembly that is making the judgment. I think we learned a very great lesson in New York, when Mr Taylor sen returned and we had done what was not right, he did not discredit the brethren, but he brought in a corrective ministry which brought the brethren around to see that what they had done was not right. But he did not intrude upon the dignity of the local assembly.

C.R.B. The spirit of that would enter into what was mentioned yesterday as to David and Abigail; there was no discrediting of David or Abigail. The result of priestly movements is that the whole assembly position is strengthened.

J.A.P. That is fully confirmed in Mr McCallum's account of Westfield and Plainfield, because the Westfield brethren would have been wrong to interfere in the other locality, and what happened was that the elders in Plainfield were respected as such, and they got adjusted and did the thing themselves to get it right.

C.R.B. I am sure that is right. The matter is adjusted in the place itself. But priestly inquiry would result matters being reviewed in a godly way, and no judgment in that way is in itself to become a test of fellowship, because all these matters are subject to review and subject to confirmation.

S.D.K.R. I think what you said as to an assembly acting in matters outside of itself needs to be underlined. Mr Taylor sen said that the nearest city does not determine anything (J.T. N.S. Vol. 40, p.373).

C.R.B. I think we are all drawing from recent experience on these matters. There are at least five places in Mr Taylor's ministry where he refers to this matter. Mr Raven had brought it out earlier (FER Vol. 20, p.293/4). How quickly something can become a formula which becomes a test of fellowship. It may be said that a certain meeting has arrived at a judgment in relation to another meeting, and you must accept it, otherwise you are not in fellowship. And it is not of God.

S.D.K.R. That was what led us astray, actually, and I am very thankful it has come out freshly.

S.McC. Mr Taylor sen said in relation to the Glanton issue that no assembly has administrative authority outside the realm of its own responsibility.

C.R.B. Whilst no assembly is independent, yet every assembly is dignified. This is really related to the rights of Christ personally in each local assembly. Philadelphia would not have arrived at a judgment about Laodicea on the basis that the Lord's rights were supreme in Philadelphia. They were equally supreme in Laodicea, and you have to leave it to the Lord as to how He is going to work things out in another locality.

S.McC. Exactly. So that we have to keep clear the distinction between local assembly authority and priestly inquiry. Because the priestly side of inquiry involves a universal position.

A.B.P. And the word is that the matter is to be settled, or established, at the mouth of the priests, the sons of Aaron, which would not restrict it to the local priesthood. What you say about the matter being handled in a priestly way and not an administrative way, I think is important.

S.McC. It is very important, because we would be in danger in acting in an administrative way outside the local assembly, of transgressing the responsibility in that local assembly.

C.R.B. So that one of the matters that flowed out of the exercises at Newcastle was that the issue there became one which affected the general fellowship. It affected the saints in a priestly way universally. And yet the settlement of matters, of course, finally had to be in the place itself.

S.D.K.R. Actually, in that matter, Wallsend, the nearest meeting, had a judgment and Mr Taylor did not agree with it. It was not the final decision in the matter.

C.R.B. In that way it is important to get through in all these matters so that there will be spoil for God; you can sense in the writings of

these beloved men, who were so used of God, that this was what they were desiring out of every difficulty that arose. Christ's own place as Head is to be seen more fully, so that if there are matters that may be causing concern to the brethren, what is in mind is not that certain administrative matters should be cleared and certain points should be established, but what God would have in mind is peace among all the assemblies with a greater understanding of the place that God should have amongst us.

J.N.C. It is a wonderful thing in that way, to think of the Lord asserting His rights and presenting Himself in a local assembly where adjustment may be needed, and appearing and just adjusting saints so that He is the one that is glorified. He has exercised His rights in an area which He loves.

C.R.B. So would you have in mind that the spirit of Paul as he spoke to those elders in Acts 20 was really the spirit of a shepherd?

J.N.C. Quite. That seems to be the bearing of what he says to them. How effective that line of things is.

C.R.B. Yes.

J.A.P. Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I am left, I alone, and they seek my life, to take it away", (1 Kings 19: 10). He was being very faithful to the Lord. How are we going to get a brother like that to say, 'Let us review things'? How are you going to get that state in the responsible element, that they might see that that is not all the point?

C.R.B. Would it not involve the priestly power of men who are with God as helping persons to review facts in the light of God and in the light of the present dispensation? It is noteworthy that when John, as writing after the breakdown had come in publicly, begins to speak of Christ personally, he says "full of grace and truth", (John 1: 14). So that what we do assembly-wise needs to be right, and it also needs to be done in the right way, in a spirit of grace, and thus in a way which would carry the consciences of the brethren universally. So

that summary judgments assembly-wise, unless it is a matter of grave public sin, would never find, I judge, a part amongst us now. We would always wait patiently, in the spirit of a shepherd, as long as we righteously can.

A.S.M. I have been very much impressed with the scripture relating to Elijah, to which we have referred. We could say that he was translated. I was thinking of a scripture Mr Taylor sen used in relation to an assembly judgment, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness", Isaiah 26: 9, but he says that God's judgments are in the assembly. That is a wonderful thing.

A.B.P. Would you think that, if priestly inquiry is being made by the nearest meeting, we do well to refrain from being active in our efforts to do things from a distance?

C.R.B. Yes. In many of these matters, the counsel of wisdom is to talk less and pray more.

G.D.W. We would not consider priestly inquiry to be interference or anything of that sort in another locality. It is a godly interest, is it not? Paul's counsel in Acts 20 shows he was greatly concerned.

C.R.B. Yes, and when we speak of priestly or spiritual inquiry, it involves, not a position which we may think we are entitled to by way of a number of years in fellowship, but a nearness to Christ as Head and a nearness to the Spirit, which helps us to take on something of the feelings of divine Persons as to any matter.

G.D.W. The Lord says to Peter, "Shepherd my sheep", John 21: 16.

C.R.B. Yes, so that when Paul bowed his knees to the Father in Ephesians 3, that was not weakness, that was an evidence of great spiritual strength. He could pray to the Father for the saints in a way which was according to divine purpose and according to the divine mind.

C.G. In the song of Moses, as recorded in Deut.32: 9, it states, "Jehovah's portion is his people". How would you give that a present day application as related to the assembly?

C.R.B. That would involve that God's pleasure is found in the willing-hearted response of those who seek to be marked by the features which are proper to the people of God. God's portion is there.

S.McC. In regard to what you say as to headship and the difference between Colossians and Ephesians. The Lord is said to be head of the body in Colossians; that is, the assembly derives from Christ as Head. But in Ephesians it is not head of the body, but head to the assembly, which is His body. She is associated with Him in the headship.

C.R.B. So that there is no suggestion that Christ is given to the assembly in Ephesians 1. We had help on that. It is "gave him to be head over all things to the assembly." (Eph 1: 22). It is the assembly as sharing with Him in headship, and seeing the distinctive place that all things are to have in relation to the whole thought of headship. It is helpful to distinguish that because the thought of head of the assembly in Colossians is how we derive wisdom from Christ as head in relation to all these various matters. But what is in mind is to get through to the experience of the glory of a universal system of things where the assembly is able to enter sympathetically and feelingly into the way that Christ is operating as head.

E.T.M. Does that synchronise with the reference to the woman in the end of Proverbs? Her husband is even known in the gates when he sits among the elders. She is in the gain of him being head to the assembly.

C.R.B. There are three references to the husband in that section, so that what lies behind the activities of the woman is her conscious relationship to the husband as head. It is not that the husband is disconnected, but that the woman is working directly in relation to her husband's own feelings. So that the final word that comes in, "Thou excellest them all", Prov.31:29, is the Lord's own touch of appreciation of the way the assembly is set for Himself.

E.T.M. I wondered whether that helps us to distinguish between what you have been stressing, not the doctrine of it, but the

experience of arriving at these things.

C.R.B. Yes, just so.

G.H. In view of what Mr McCallum is saying would "and he is the head of the body" be more in the way of direction?

S.McC. As head of the body, the assembly derives from the head, as our brother was saying, wisdom. Union is not taught in Colossians. Union is taught in Ephesians, and I think we need to see what union involves in that sense. The assembly is a distinct entity. She is the woman. And she is united to the Man, to Christ. In Colossians it is organic. The body derives from the head as the organism.

A.B.P. Would "we have the mind of Christ", (1 Cor 2: 16), relate to that?

C.R.B. It is good to distinguish what you are drawing attention to from the references. in 1 Cor 12, where the head is viewed as part of the body. That is a different setting of things altogether, where a human figure is used to show how the members of the body would work together.

S.D.K.R. Would the Ephesian touch come in in Genesis 1, "Let us make man in our image"? and then it says, "Let them have dominion... And God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" Gen 1: 26,27. Would the dominion be linked on with the Ephesian thought?

S.McC. Oh, yes, I think so. In union the woman is brought to the man. That is not the point in Colossians. Mr Raven gave an address on headship and union, and linked the Lord in headship with the body organically as setting out the thought of union. After the meeting, Mr Stoney spoke to Mr Raven and said, 'Is not union linked with the woman being brought to the man, rather than the organic side of the Lord being head of the body?' And Mr Raven thanked Mr Stoney very much for his help in that. Rebecca was brought to Isaac. The woman in Genesis 2 was brought to the man. That is the basis of union, is it not?

C.R.B. So you would link the thought of union with Genesis 2, but the thought of the assembly sharing in headship with Christ with Genesis 1.

PLAINFIELD NJ

14 April 1974

"GOD IS ONE"

E.T.Maynard

1 Timothy 2: 1-10; 1 Thess 1: 8-10

We were remarking earlier as to the various ways in which the Lord Jesus is referred to, and the ways in which He refers to Himself. It is a wonderful theme. You covet to have some little part in what God is setting out in Christ, His beloved Son, with a view to securing finally a universe for the pleasure of God. I do not suppose there is any here from the youngest to the oldest that does not appreciate family life. A little one might not be able to give a lecture on family life, but it surely knows what it is and the enjoyment of it, an institution of God. Alas, much has been done – we do not want to say too much about that, but yet you cannot forget it by way of the destruction of family life. It is of the devil, but God delights in families. It is a wonderful thought, family life. Gideon, you remember said to the men, those ruthless men, Zebah and Zalmunna, "What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor?" (Judges 8: 18). They had to admit, of course, the quality of the persons that they had had to do with. They said, They were all like you, everyone of them just like you, all "resembled the sons of a king" (v 18); and think of his feelings you love to think of it - he said, "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother" (v 19). He did not mention his father, he could have; it was the feeling side that was emphasised, the maternal side. He said, "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother".

I mention this because of God's delight in families, and what family is like the assembly? It is the finest of the families of God. You and I have been privileged to be drawn into it through mercy, and I trust that everyone here has a sense of being of the family of God; if not, from the youngest to the oldest we trust you will be drawn into it. God has the wherewithal to meet the requirements in the shedding of the blood of Jesus - precious blood, precious to us, we have to say how precious He is. So, Peter quoting from the prophet Isaiah,

the evangelical prophet, and adding his own quota to the response that is due to God because of the preciousness of Jesus, says, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness", 1 Peter 2: 7. I trust that the Lord will help us in the time that we spend together, a little time, that we might be increased in our desires to be more like Him in a scene where He is still publicly rejected. But it is a scene where He is soon coming to set everything right so that finally God will show how He is able to keep men in flesh and blood conditions for a thousand years for his pleasure, and then bring in what is to abide eternally. These are real matters, and I think the Spirit of God would use the glad tidings to stimulate us further into the experience of these things. "God is one" the apostle says. Why should he say that? It is wonderful. Is it not, among other things, to occupy us primarily with God? And with the uniqueness of His greatness and His being, and the vital necessity of paying attention to what is in the mind of God for men?

I read the passage in Thessalonians, coupled with this passage in Timothy, because we need to be encouraged if ever there was a day when encouragement was needed; and when was there not a time when encouragement was needed in the history of the testimony? But we have to face what is current in our own day, as those who have gone before us faced what was current in their day, and we need, beloved brethren, to appreciate more what the Lord said as to this service, "Others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours" John 4: 38. How was the testimony held in this city, and in other cities in Canada and in America and in every place that you could think of? How was it held for God's pleasure? In weakness and outward smallness, and yet in reality. It was held by persons who were prepared to suffer. We have to face up to this fact. We were saying a little of it before, that we are only of value in the testimony as we are prepared to take our lives in our hands.

The brethren will remember the passage in Psalm 119 - what a Psalm that is to go over - where the Psalmist says, "My life is continually in my hand" (v 109). Well, what does that mean? That is not a person who is going on in this world occupying himself with

what relates to it, even what is legitimate, and seeking for a good time in the world without being concerned as to what is in the mind of God for men. It is just the opposite; it is a person who is committed to the maintenance of what is for God, what has been secured at such infinite cost in the death of Christ. "My life", he says, "is continually in my hand". Well, that links on with what we had earlier, a person who is prepared to lose his life in this world. That is the kind of man that would say that, the only person that can say that - not that one knows so much about it - but what the thing is in itself is open to us and we need to encourage one another along those lines. That is the kind of men and women we relate to the practical side of how the testimony is held. There is a time when the sisters are sons, not women, sons, as well as brothers. That has its place and its time, but the practical side is also to be appreciated; the testimony has been held down through the ages by godly men and godly women. We need to appreciate that, and one would encourage the beloved younger brethren, and the young children, to learn to appreciate parental care and exercise, both as it is seen in the assembly and also in the household, because that is the way that the testimony has come through to us, and that is the way it is going to be held from the divine side until the rapture.

What we need to think about more in a day when changes are so rapid amongst men, and even in the public profession the churches and professors are adapting themselves to men's exercises and desires and practices, is that the economy of love that we are brought into is unchangeable. Divine standards never change. Hence we can see how persons who have held the testimony ahead of us had to go against the current; they couldn't just go with the current, they went against it, and that entails suffering. The apostle says that persons who would live godly must suffer persecution. "And all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" 2 Tim 3: 12. I am saying all this because I feel for myself the need of appreciating more, first of all what God has secured in the death of Christ; such a one as He had to die in order that you and I should be in this place of favour; and

then from the practical side the way the testimony has been held, to appreciate that others have gone before and at the cost of their lives in suffering have held the testimony inviolate. Thank God for the way we are being helped into it after the recent breakdown. Divine things will never change. That is a wonderfully stimulating and stabilising thought, and that helps me to encourage the brethren in what the apostle says, "God is one". How many persons in this city and in other cities today are having each one his own thoughts about this thing and that thing, and perhaps about God. Alas, the Lord said to the disciples, as we said earlier, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" Matt 16: 13; and various persons were saying various things. It is the same thing today, it is current. But the apostle would focus on the living God, the God of our salvation, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be rendered in its own times". That is a wonderful thing. Everyone, every generation has had its time, in the rendering of the testimony. And currently, those who are here, this is our time. The testimony is being rendered in its time. What testimony this is, that God has given His beloved Son to die in order that you and I might live. God is interested in each one here, even the youngest. What did the Lord say when the disciples thought that only the older persons should be occupied with Him in His teaching and His service? "Suffer the little children to come to me", (Mark 10: 14). He was interested in the little ones, and He has not changed, as we are together now. He is interested in the little ones as well as the big ones. God's interest is in every child here, and every woman, every man, God, the blessed God, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He looks down into the hearts of the little children, and He says to them, Come to me. It is wonderful that, "the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus". It is a wonderful thing to contemplate that in the most adverse conditions and in the most, you might say, excruciating situations, the blessedness of the manhood of Jesus was protected from heaven's side. It had to be so.

What a day it will be when every knee shall bow to Jesus. They will have to; it is not a question whether you want to or not in that day, but what a blessed thing it is now for young ones as well as older ones, for everyone, to bow the knee to Him happily. What a precious privilege. And so you remember we referred earlier to the centurion. What a dark time it was, the Lord of glory crucified; I feel for myself how little I really understand the immensity of the death of Christ and of his crucifixion, lifted up ignominiously from man's side on a cross and taunted, and jeered at, insulted. Well, we might say there is nothing darker than that, there could not be; and in those times God provided persons to signalize the uniqueness and the blessedness of Jesus: the centurion, "Truly", he says, "this man was Son of God" Matt 27: 54. What better could a man say? Could he say anything better, except to praise God? And the thief on the cross. What a dark time it was for men as such, the Lord of glory dying on the cross when everything, you might say, had ceased for the moment to function, it had to; darkness over the face of the whole earth, how could it be different? The Lord of glory dying, giving Himself a ransom for all, it says. God provided this man to call attention to the uniqueness of the manhood of Jesus in those conditions. He said to his fellow, you remember, "Dost thou too not fear God, thou that art under the same judgment? and we indeed justly" Luke 23: 40 - we are getting the reward of what we have done. That was a righteous judgment, a righteous pronouncement. Then, he says, "this man has done nothing amiss" (v 41). Was that all? No. God had the wherewithal to meet the man's exercises, as He always has; He has now what is needed to meet our own exercises, whatever our needs are individually God has the wherewithal to meet them. He said to the Lord Jesus, "Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom" (v 42). What a heart of love, what response. "Today", He said, "shalt thou be with me in paradise" (v 43). No waiting. He meets the exercise immediately. Well, that is the glad tidings.

God has in mind that our exercises currently should be met. One would trust that we commit ourselves with this idea in mind in

faith, that currently, the week that lies before us if we are left - if we are left, we have to take that attitude at all times (there are two sides, we may be left and we may be caught away) - but if we are left, God has in mind that our needs should be met, and met "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" Phil 4: 19; not met on man's level or creature level. The simplest thing in our affairs, and in our need and what relates to us currently for our maintenance is supplied on the level of where Christ is. That is a wonderful thing. Paul says to the Philippians, "my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus". That includes everything, it is on that level; isn't that wonderful? Most encouraging; most, you might say, uplifting, exalting, in a scene where we are lightly esteemed - as a brother said to me this morning - from the public point of view we are nothing in this world. We might as well accept it. The more we do, the better. But in God's sight and in God's realm we are everything for God's pleasure, like Christ. So, you get here, "the man Christ Jesus".

Pilate, was a man in government, in dignity, as Paul said in 1 Timothy - these men we are exhorted to pray for, and of course whatever they be as to themselves personally we have to think of the office that they fill. God will have government, and He is over ruling; a day will come when the Lord will govern directly, but for the moment government is in the hands of men. We need to pray for them. Why? That we should live piously and soberly and in a way that the testimony continues. But think, beloved brethren, of being held in an area available for God to demonstrate the glad tidings.

That is in these passages that I have read; what I may be able to say - and I trust it might be profitable, I trust I will be saying what is right and what is suitable - but how little can we say. But, as you look at the work of God in the saints it is a demonstration of glad tidings. I think that is what is meant in Paul saying the glad tidings "sounded out" from the Thessalonians. It is not just the words, it is the substance of the thing in the brethren, the work of God, that you walk through the area and the neighbours - they are responsible for what they see; if they see the work of God they are responsible.

That is glad tidings, that is part of it. Very little can be said as I am saying it now, but what God is demonstrating in the saints as they move about amongst men is the thing. It is sounding out; persons who turn "to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens". Wonderful thing that, "turn to God" - it is the positive thing - "from idols"; the way it is put is wonderful, it is not turning from idols to God although that is true, but it says they "turned to God" as though attracted to God in the glad tidings, and it is from what previously engaged them, idols, "to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens"; that is loving His appearing.

Well, I trust beloved brethren that we might be encouraged, that we go in more and more, that we experience really what is meant in the beginning of Proverbs when it says, "the path of the righteous (just) is as the shining light", not 'going on and dimming', but "going on and brightening until the day be fully come" Prov 4: 18. Well, God will use the local meeting to promote these things, that in every meeting you come to there should be something that is some indication that it was better than the one before. That is how I understand it, and that is not saying too much, not too much to expect, "going on and brightening"; that means each day will be brighter than the day before, that is how we understand it. Well, God is able for it, and if we desire it He will meet our desires in Christ and in the Spirit. But let us be encouraged to be available to one another, everyone in the local meeting, from the youngest to the oldest, is needed for the practical maintenance day by day of what is to go on. If we are available, as these two passages show, God is able: He has the wherewithal and the Lord directs His attention to persons that He can call on, and not only call on them but count on them, to furnish an answer to what is in His own heart. And so we go on, and being helped the service of God will be enriched, the glad tidings enhanced, and persons are saved. Think of being sympathetic with God in His own desires. His desire is that all men should be saved. That is a wonderful thing. You might say, well, it won't be. Well, that is not any deficiency, speaking reverently, from

God's side. It is man's will against God 's will, and this brings us to further appreciate the one that said, "not my will, but thine be done", (Luke 22: 42), Jesus. Well, I trust we may be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

9 December 1973

THE MYSTERY

J.D.Gray

Romans 16: 25-27; Ephesians 3: 1-6; Colossians 2: 1-15

I would look to the Lord to guide me to say a little about the mystery. Perhaps anything that will be said will be apparent, but I thought it would be profitable for those of us who are younger to see something of the distinction that attaches to what is brought out in these passages and referred to as the "revelation of the mystery".

The dear younger brethren should know that the record of Scripture in the old dispensation before Christianity did not bring out the truth of the mystery. It was not revealed in it. We can go back to Old Testament scriptures and find out things that set out in type features of the assembly, but in their disclosure to those who lived then, prior to the incoming of Christ, God did not reveal the truth of the mystery. He was going on with the Jewish nation which was separate from the nations around, but the mystery is not a national thought. It does not relate to the Jewish nation. The apostle speaks about "obedience of faith to all the nations" but that involves the Gentile world. It involves the western world largely where the truth of the assembly has been made known but how few are in the understanding of the secret of the mystery today - how few! How few are in the enjoyment of it, though perhaps knowing something of it in a sort of abstract way. The Lord Jesus said when He was here not to cast your pearls before swine. There is something that the believer holds dear and precious that is not for the world. The testimonial aspect is more related to what is external, but the truth of the mystery is a secret matter, secret to persons initiated, and we want all to be among them.

Paul brings it out to the saints at Rome briefly, and I wondered if this is what he refers to in Ephesians when he says, "I have written before briefly". He has touched on much in the epistle to the Romans, bringing out how men should have been affected by the creation, by the stars. He brings out the degradation to which man

had gone. He brings out also what man is as in Christ, and how he would have the believer to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Now that persons are secured for God through the glad tidings, he says he wants to tell them about something that has been in God's heart and mind from eternity. The mystery was not a second thought with God. It was one of His primary thoughts, but yet in the wisdom of His ways He did not disclose it. You may say that we read sometimes on a Lord's Day about Adam and Eve as types of Christ and the assembly in Genesis 2. That is typical and the understanding of it is confined to persons who have the Spirit of God, who can enquire into the truth of the Old Testament from the standpoint of the New, but the mystery and what it involves, was not made known to the sons of men. What a privilege is yours and mine to be among persons to whom the revelation of the mystery is disclosed. I want to elevate your thinking, dear brethren, in relation to these truths, to grasp something of them, the magnitude of them, the greatness of them. Go to the Old Testament and you will find prophecy that has been fulfilled and prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled when the assembly goes, but you will not find a whisper of the assembly period involving the truth of the mystery, literally you will not. It did not form part of the ways of God, it was distinct. The Lord did not develop the truth of the mystery although He alludes to it in a direct way particularly in Matthew 16, 18, "On this rock I will build my assembly". As we enquire in the Gospels we will find allusions to it, but the unfolding of the teaching in relation to the truth of the mystery awaited divine timing, until Christ took His place on high. Christ is up there. That is not the mystery. The mystery is not that Christ is in glory. Mr Taylor sen says, 'That is a plain fact'. It is good to be assured in your soul, dear young brethren, that it is a plain fact that Christ is in glory. It is a plain fact because the disciples saw Him go up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, but what the mystery brings out is not Christ in glory, but Christ in you, Christ down here. Who is in the secret of that? Paul just touches on it in Romans. He says ".....silence has been kept in the times of the ages, but which has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures - (I think that is the New Testament scriptures) -

according to commandment of the eternal God, made known for obedience of faith to all the nations". So there is an ingredient that is necessary - that is faith, and if you have faith, there is an added feature - obedience of faith. Now it is presented from that point of view in Romans in which as secured by the gospel you are a subject person and ready to be initiated into the mystery on the basis of the obedience of faith.

In Ephesians Paul is a prisoner, held by the Roman governor, you might say with no will of his own. He would look at his bonds, as he said to Agrippa when he addressed him, "I would to God both in little and in much that not only thou but all who have heard me this day, should become such as I also am except these bonds" (Acts 26, v 29); but he never lost heart. What a man Paul was! From the moment that he got an inkling as to what was here on this earth till the time that the Lord took him, he was assiduous in relation to what had been committed to him. He is a prisoner "of the Christ Jesus for you nations" - that is for the Gentile nations - and then he says, "if indeed ye have heard of the administration of the grace of God which has been given to me towards you, that by revelation the mystery has been made known to me". He wrote it to the Roman saints and now he is reiterating to persons in whom the truth of God was seen in its fulness, that "which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of men". Do not let us lose sight dear brethren, at the close of the dispensation of the distinctiveness of what the mystery is. It came in through Paul as something distinct and apart from all that had proceeded before. He says "as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets". That is a most interesting allusion because he says "by revelation the mystery has been made known to me" (verse 3). It is himself distinctively, but then he brings in others, "it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets", as if others have been brought into the distinctiveness of what Paul has been given and we have the gain of that in our time. The vicissitudes of the testimony, the sorrows of church history, have not resulted in the loss of this to us. We still have what has been revealed "to his holy apostles and prophets".

These are New Testament persons. Think of what the Lord has afforded in the time of the recovery, because that feature of holy apostles and prophets is there. It has been revealed to us through them. What a thing to be revealed! He says "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". There never was anything like it before. You think of a godly Jew hearing what Paul was bringing out, that the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus, that Christ should be in glory and His body should be here, and that the nations should be built into that, bound up in it. The middle wall of partition which was there in the old dispensation between the Jew and all that was around, God has broken down, and He is bringing out something that is far greater than anything He ever had in mind in regard of Judaism. What thoughts are these! Oh! to grasp that they can be yours now! and that you can be amongst persons initiated into the fulness of the mystery. You take account of the brethren and find out that Christ is in them. Find out that you are a joint partaker, you are a joint heir, a joint body. It is not something you have on your own, but something you have that is joint. It involves others. It involves the brother next to you. It involves the sister next to you. It involves finding out what is so precious that is in them.

Paul is bringing that out. He says as it were that he wants you to know something of the administration of the mystery and how it has been arrived at. Not only that the mystery was in the counsels of God but it has been arrived at now. In the assembly the allvarious wisdom of God is seen now. It is seen by the angels, "that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God." Think of what comes out in the assembly, the assembly as convened, the all-various wisdom of God. The principalities and authorities saw the foundations of the earth laid, the sons of God shouted for joy, Job 38: 7. They saw the vicissitudes of time and all that happened in the periods of the earth's history, but they had never seen anything like this before. What God was doing in the

formation of the assembly here in this scene, was bringing in a vessel that is going to be translated to glory finally.

What drew me to these scriptures was what is said in Colossians, "to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge", (chap 2: 2-3). If you want wisdom, you will find it there. You may have to search, you may have to dig, but you will find it. We cannot afford dear brethren, to settle on our lees. We have come through much, through difficult times, but we do not want to fall short of the apprehension and enjoyment of what God has for us in the mystery. Paul saw a danger at Colosse and Laodicea. He says "what combat I have for you"; he brings forward the truth as to the mystery and the truth as to Christ as the Head of the body to help them forward. Now church history brings up the question as to whether the beloved brethren in Laodicea reached it. In the Lord's address to them in Revelation, He is outside, and He is standing at the door knocking. He would want to come in. Paul's combat was real, "I would have you know what combat I have for you, and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; to the end that their hearts may be encouraged," Col 2: 1-2. He wants to encourage your heart. Do not give up. He wants you to be strengthened, "to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." Have you found that? Oh the wealth that is resident in the assembly! What the men of the recovery have brought out is that Christ in glory is one thing, but that Christ in you is the truth of the mystery. Oh to see what God is doing, dear brethren, that God is forming Christ in you. It is *that Man* that is being formed in you, and that is the mystery. Man may accept that Christ was here, he may accept that Christ is in glory but the truth that Christ is here, formed in you, so that you come out in those features, is a secret, but not to the Christian as initiated into it. It gives him added impetus to go forward and to watch for the dangers. The treasure is hidden, it is not immediately

apparent, but you can find it. It is not beyond you, it can be found.

Job (chap 28: 8) brings out that there is a way which the proud beasts have not trodden nor the fierce lion passed over. Do you know that way? Do you know what is down there in that place where the gold is, where the silver is? He is speaking literally about the mines in the earth, where the wealth is hid. God hid it there. Man by his efforts has found it. Spiritually the truth is hidden. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. Where? In the mystery. You have to find it. By diligence and by the Spirit you can find it. Oh the gain that comes from diligence! the gain to the soul that finds something real that God has in one and another. Find it in your brother, find it in your sister, find it in yourself! That Christ is in you and that something is being formed down here on this earth which will be translated to glory, which is eternal in character and unrelated to the earth in one sense. It is heavenly in origin and heavenly in destiny. Oh, the grace that passes understanding, that we should be brought into it - we of the nations! What claim had we on it? None.

We have been brought in, joint heirs, joint partakers, a joint body.

So Paul would tell us that these things are there. Go in for them.

But you have to watch. In Colossians you are not in heaven, according to the teaching. You are still on the earth, so there are dangers around. There is philosophy and vain deceit, but he says "As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him." There are elements around not according to Christ, but he adds that in Christ dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Oh dear brethren, let us consider the fulness of that statement. In Him, in Christ dwells the fulness, or as the note points out, the completeness of the Godhead bodily. Mr Darby says 'in a real, human body', and we are complete in Him. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily now up there, but we are in Him, complete in Him. There is nothing you require outside of Christ. The fulness of the God head is there in Christ bodily and is towards us, and we as towards God are in Christ, complete in Him. Who understands these things? We do not understand them fully, dear brethren, but it bows our hearts in worship to the God who has revealed them to us. That is the Person in whom you are complete,

and "in whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ." You put it off, you do not want to be clothed that way, the body of the flesh. You have done that in baptism, as it says "buried with him in baptism". Learn the truth of your baptism, that you are buried with Christ in baptism. You have been found alive in sins? You want to be for God down here? Well, how can you be with all the burdens and all that lay on you, so you are buried with Christ in baptism. This is His death, you are buried with Him in baptism. Baptism is a type of that, that you are buried with Christ, and further "in which ye have been also raised with him through faith of the working of God." That is, God has raised Christ and through faith we apprehend that He has raised us. And He has not raised you in condemnation; He has not raised you in your sins.

Christ has been raised and He has left our sins in His grave. What a thing, dear younger brethren, to think that God, through the death of Christ, has operated in relation to all the liabilities and they have all been left behind in the grave, in the death of Christ. So He is raised free from that and so are you raised free from that. You are still on the earth but you are risen. But oh, the Person of Christ is holding your heart. The dangers are around, but grasp something of the fact that the liabilities have been met. God has set you at liberty, liberty for what? liberty for Himself. Everything else has been taken out of the way. He has quickened us. He has given us life, a new life that gravitates to Himself, and wants to live in relation to the divine interest; a life that can enjoy what the saints are as the body of Christ, what the mystery is. You are not quickened to live again in this world. You are quickened in relation to another world, but you are still down here. You are risen by faith but you are still down here. Beware of the dangers! Hold on to something of what Christ becomes to you, the greatness of the Person of Christ in whom you are complete. You are complete in Him, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Well, may the Lord encourage us, dear brethren, for His Name's sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

23 February 1974

THE CHILDREN'S TIME-KEEPING

God set the sun in the heavens to rule the day and it is the greatest of His created blessings for us. Jesus said that it rises on the evil and on the good - in loving-kindness putting the evil persons first.

The sun reminds us of the Lord being now in glory, having made purification of sins by His blood. He is there for all and it is with the eyes of faith that we see Him.

It is the sun that really governs our time-keeping although we have clocks and watches. Even the younger children will have seen a sundial showing the time getting later as the shadow moves down. A king of Israel once wanted a sign that God would bless him. The prophet Isaiah then asked him to choose whether the shadow should go down or go back on the sundial ten degrees.

No doubt the king, Hezekiah, had learned that it was easy to lose time and therefore said that it was a light thing for the shadow to go down. So he wisely asked for the shadow to go backward and thus gain time. God did this for him by a miracle. If the degrees were the same as in our geography books the time would have been forty minutes - just about the length of a gospel preaching!

Even if we have wasted time God's grace is still towards us in the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are told to redeem, or buy, the time which means using it wisely because it is so valuable. Many years ago a queen of England would at the end of her life have given all her possessions for a moment of time. I suppose she felt that she had neglected God's salvation. Do you prove that *now* is the well-accepted time and *today* is the day of salvation?

J.C.Evershed