

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

APPRECIATION OF CHRIST

APPRECIATION OF THE ASSEMBLY

YE IN ME, AND I IN YOU

REDEMPTION

HE COMETH

APPRECIATION OF CHRIST

Jim Gray

2 Chronicles 29: 1,2; 34: 1,2; 28: 1

I do not want to speak in detail about the kings but, as will have been noticed, there is a phrase which came into each of the passages, that is they either "did what was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done" - that is Hezekiah and Josiah - or this other king Ahaz who "did not what was right in the sight of Jehovah, like David his father". God took pleasure in persons who were "like David his father". What was it in David that God delighted in? Both these kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, celebrate the passover, make way for the recovery of the service of God, and, indeed, Josiah's passover exceeds many that had gone before. One phrase comes into 2 Chronicles 35 in the celebration of his passover, that is, "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built", v 3. I think that is what David appreciated and what God appreciated in David. It was the place he had in his heart for the ark. I think that is what God and the Lord Jesus appreciate at the present time, the place we have in our hearts for Him. David says in Psalm 132, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids" until he finds a resting place for the ark. He said, "Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood".

The ark was despised for a long time in the reign of Saul, and David found it in the house of Abinadab. Christ in type not appreciated for a long time, and then appreciated by David, leads to the recovery of the service of God. The order of the service of God makes way for the exaltation of Christ in our affections. The whole saga that is presented in the Kings and the Chronicles after David and after Solomon is one of oscillation. You get bright spots when kings did what was right in the sight of Jehovah according to all that David their father had done. It seems to me that if we are going to be preserved and kept in the testimony, it must be on the basis of

appreciation of Christ. The history of the church is one of oscillation. I am sure recovery has been brought about by appreciation of Christ. The public side is gone; the public recognition of things has gone. The candlestick has been removed, that is Ephesus, as we have been taught. Philadelphia is not the candlestick. Philadelphia is appreciation of Christ. That is what keeps things vital. If we are going to be preserved in vitality until the Lord comes, it must be in appreciation of Himself. It must work out in all our lives. That is what these two kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, worked out in their lives. When we come to know the Lord as our Saviour, we give Him a place in our heart. What you find is that a place in your heart means a place in your life. He is worthy of the chief place. We can always begin to accord Him that. The great test is whether we are preserved in it. Every vicissitude of life, every decade of life, childhood, teenage, twenties, thirties, and so on, each has its own tests, and what comes up in these chapters is whether we are maintained in our affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. As we were reminded in a word in this room two or three weeks ago, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood", Rev 1: 5, that is the One who is to have the chief place in our life. It is good to remember that, "to him who loves us", presently loves us, "and has washed us from our sins in his blood". He is the One who is the delight of heaven, as the scripture says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17.

So Hezekiah and Josiah found their delight in Christ, like David their father. There have been men that have gone before us in this city and other cities in the history of the testimony, who had Christ in their hearts through the whole of their lives. He came into every walk of their lives. It says here, "walked in the ways of David his father". It is the steps of Jesus. Peter speaks of Him as "a model that ye should follow in his steps", 1 Pet 2: 21. There is help to walk in those steps by the Spirit. Think of the resource of heaven at the present time! It has been put into the dispensation in which we are, persons strengthened by the Spirit, led by the Spirit: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God", Rom 8: 14. It is

not that we are left to our own devices, to seek to plod a way through our natural resources, but it is as committed to the Lord Jesus and making room for Him in our hearts, that the Spirit would help us. The Spirit of God helps us to walk so as to please God so that there are persons in this scene in whom heaven has delight. The psalmist says, "To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent ... In them is all my delight", Ps 16: 3. Heaven has delight in Christ and also delight in the saints. These thoughts were in my heart and mind to bring before the saints as to the appreciation of Christ, in view of being preserved in vitality so that the service of God does not become a liturgy. No matter how well taught we are, it remains vital to us and a spiritual experience, something that is pleasing to heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ must continually be appreciated by us. Well, may the Lord help us for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

6 March 1995

APPRECIATION OF THE ASSEMBLY

Robert Renton

Psalm 137: 1-6

What our brother has said has touched a chord. In the measure in which we appreciate Christ, we will value and appreciate the assembly. The Lord has been pleased to give us light as to this wondrous august vessel, unknown in Christendom and yet we are the custodians of this wonderful inheritance as to what the assembly is to the heart of Christ and, may I add? for our enjoyment. It is a challenge. Where is my chief joy? That is a challenge to me. We enjoy family life and many things, but I wonder if the assembly has the place that it should have. Oh, what it is for the heart of Christ! He speaks of "my assembly". What feelings, what emotions must have been in the Lord's heart, when He said, "on this rock I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18. It is nearest to His heart.

And so the psalmist begins in a downcast way: "We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof". Well, you do not hang harps on willows. You use them to play, to make music. "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that made us wail required mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How should we sing a song of Jehovah's upon a foreign soil?" Then he says, "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill". It seems that there is an area of buoyancy in his soul as he speaks of Jerusalem. They had been carried away captive, but the very suggestion of Jerusalem seems to bring something living and vital into the heart of the writer. "If I forget thee, Jerusalem..." - oh, may we never forget Jerusalem!

Dear brethren, that is a heritage we have, handed down to us, the truth and value of the assembly and the joy of participating in assembly life. Again I say, in the measure in which we appreciate Christ, to use our brother's expression, in that measure we will value increasingly the assembly. You look around and think of persons who could be here and are not here. That causes sadness and

sorrow. Where is our life? Why do we live? What is our objective? Is it Christ and His interests and His assembly? What privileges we enjoy! And then he says, "If I do not remember thee," - that is Jerusalem - "let my tongue cleave to my palate: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy". We have many joys, but the assembly and all its interests and outgoings is to be preferred above our chief joy. I think if this were true of us there would be rapid progress with us, Christ's interests, my interests. What a privilege we have! May we value it increasingly and every time we meet together, add our quota. Some of us have little to add, but let us bring our tribute and our appreciation of all that into which we have been brought and value one another in an increased way. This would be normal in our lives, to value one another in an increased way. May it be so, for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

6 March 1995

YE IN ME, AND I IN YOU

Eric Burr

John 14: 20; Ephesians 3: 17-21

I refer briefly to these verses because a connection between them came to my mind on the Lord's Day. I do not speak now as to "ye shall know that I am in my Father", a very remarkable expression. When Jesus was here, He referred to the Father being in Him – "the Father who abides in me, he does the works", John 14: 10, but He says "I am in my Father". Since Jesus in His manhood was speaking here, I do not suppose we can altogether divorce His manhood from that expression, but I do not claim to grasp it. I do not think we arrive at it by faith, but I think we believe it: I make that distinction. One might say that the security of the present dispensation rests in that for He is there and He is there operating to maintain the grace of the Father in every characteristic. Our brother has referred to the truth: an essential character of the truth in the present day is that the Father is manifested in grace, and this is to have power with us - but Jesus is there.

But it was the other part of the verse which I had in mind: "ye in me". I link that with "the assembly in Christ Jesus". "I in you" may be collective. On the whole John 14 is individual, but Jesus is speaking to the company of the disciples and He refers to "you" and no doubt has them all in mind. In any event, He had previously been speaking of the Spirit, and there is one Spirit. I wonder for myself how much I have grasped "ye in me" or "the assembly in Christ Jesus". The phrase comes to us readily on a Lord's Day morning, but what does it mean? "The assembly in Christ Jesus" does not speak just of a handful of those who have light and to whom these things have come. "The assembly in Christ Jesus" is that great entity, formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit and that is now to be taken account of as in Christ Jesus. If we have any impression at all of the vastness of the assembly, the vessel in which the Spirit dwells, how glorious it makes Christ Jesus that such an entity as that can be

in Him! The reference must be to His manhood. What glorious manhood there is in Christ Jesus - "the assembly in Christ Jesus", and that is "ye in me".

But then "I in you"; I relate that to "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts". If you think over the scriptures, especially in Paul and in John, you will be impressed with how much is said that bears on Christ being in us, "Christ in you the hope of glory", Col 1: 27 John speaks of abiding in Him. But this is deeper than that: "I in you", that is, Christ dwelling in the heart, through faith. What an excellent thing that is! One might even think of hymns that say, 'Have you any room for Jesus?' What He Himself leaves and promises in relation to this day in which we are is "I in you".

Why I refer to this is that I link it with the verses in Ephesians "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" and then it builds that up to "being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God". These things are cumulative: one builds on the other. But the governing verb in John 14 is "ye shall know". Now, I ask us all - I could ask us all personally because the question is personal - how far do you know that Christ is in you? How far do you know that Christ dwells in your heart through faith? How far is it real? It is in the Bible. Of course, it is in the Bible, but how far do you know it? Does faith hold things purely objectively and, therefore, in some sense distantly or is the reality of Christ dwelling in your heart by faith something that you actually know? If you know it, you will be able to tell me about it, or tell somebody about it, what it is to have Christ Himself.

"In that day ye shall know..." I know it has commonly been said that "that day" is the Spirit's day. That is a good general answer. But what this verse follows upon is "because I live". In the day in which He lives and lives in that new condition as Man, the day that is characterised by Christ living - "whom Paul affirmed to be living", Acts 25: 19 - when Jesus is known to be living, in that day, you will

know that you are in Me and I am in you, you will actually know. I know the verb is objective: the notes tell us that. But if you look at the note to which you are referred in 1 Corinthians 8, you get the impression that it is more than objective, that it is knowledge that you have actually acquired. Mr Darby says, it could be rendered, 'I am acquainted with'. Now, are we all acquainted with this day? It is our present day, in which Jesus is living, and we are in Him and He is in us.

I allude to the verse in Ephesians 3, "the assembly in Christ Jesus" because it makes it explicit. "The assembly in Christ Jesus" is not association with Him: it is further than that, we absorbed into Him. The nearest other expression to it in scripture is, "and the two shall be one flesh", Eph 5: 31. But what I was impressed with is the challenge of this. We run over Ephesians 3 time and time again, but the word in John 14 tests us as to the reality of actual knowledge of "ye in me, and I in you", and the day in which that is known is the day that is characterised by the fact that "because I live ye also shall live".

Well, these things have their profound aspect, but they are really the simple possession of every Christian. May we be drawn into them!

LONDON

23 January 1996

REDEMPTION

Douglas Steven

Ruth 2: 1-4, 8, 10-12; 4: 1-8; Revelation 5: 9,10

These scriptures speak about redemption. It is part of the gospel, but before you can have redemption, you have to have a Redeemer. And the only one who has the right to be a redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to redeem anything, as you would know - redeeming means to buy a thing back - a price has to be paid. In order that man might be redeemed to God, a price has been paid. The price was the laying down of the precious life of the Redeemer. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to lay down His life, to redeem man to God, to lay a basis for God to come out in blessing for man, for you and me tonight. Jesus Christ came into the world, the great Redeemer: His work was to redeem man lost through sin. Sin came into the creation at the beginning, as we read, when the earth was formed and man was placed in it in innocence, but Satan worked in the heart of the woman, the man, and brought sin into God's creature and into His creation. Sin came in through man: "... by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death", Rom 5: 12. So what is to happen? God provided a basis for the blessing of man. Very quickly His plan came to light. He had a Redeemer in mind because He clothed Adam and his wife with coats of skin. He knew that one who was sinless, guiltless, had to be found whereby man could be clothed and be suitable in His presence. It looked forward to the incoming of Jesus. All the blood of the bulls and the goats that was offered in the Old Testament was not sufficient to redeem God's creature to Himself. God had to come to the earth Himself, and He came in in the form of a babe in Bethlehem's manger, "God manifest in flesh, O wonder of His universe!" (Hymn 400). Do you think of it? Is your heart affected by it tonight? Just for a moment be affected by the incarnation, the incoming of Christ into the world, the Redeemer coming into the world, Himself the Creator, coming and taking on a body, prepared for Him, coming into that body in the form of a babe in a manger. How attractive, nothing

more attractive! And He grew up as a boy and as a young man, in every way, in every moment, in every detail, in every step of His life perfection, moving on to Jerusalem, to Calvary, to the cross, day by day. He was the Redeemer.

I read in Ruth because it shows that the redeemer, this man Boaz, this mighty man of wealth, really a type of Christ, has a great affection, and so it is with Christ. You do not redeem a thing you do not love. You know the story about the boy who built the boat: you have heard it, I am sure, many times. He built his boat, he loved his boat, and he painted it and set up the mast and he looked at it and loved it, and he lost it. But he saw it in a shop window and he said, 'That is my boat', and he went in and he bought it, and as he came out of the shop with the boat in his hands, he said, 'I have my boat; it is mine. I loved you. I made you. I have paid for you. You are twice mine.' That is what redemption is. You are twice mine. God made man in His image and likeness and man fell. And what did God do? God redeemed him. He bought him back again. What did it cost God? Oh, the love of a Saviour God when He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners, to redeem man to Himself! And here I thought of this woman, Ruth, she lighted on this field by chance, on the field of Boaz. Perhaps you have come to the gospel meeting plenty of times. Perhaps you have just chanced to come. It just happened to Ruth. It says, "and she chanced to light" in that field. Maybe a work of God was there, but there she was and she found favour and her ways were pleasing. She came under the notice of Boaz right away. He comes to the reapers. What does he say to them? "Jehovah be with you! And they said to him, Jehovah bless thee!" What a link there was. God is not going to impute your trespasses. He is not going to bring up your past history, not as the gospel is preached. He is not imputing your sins. Because He has a Redeemer at His right hand, God is saying tonight from heaven that a basis has been laid, "Come now, let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow", Isa 1: 18. He will reason with you about your sins: "Come now, let us reason together". Would you not like to reason with God

about your sins? Oh, you say, I have been forgiven. God will reason with you about your sins, sins that perhaps you have forgotten may be brought to your remembrance; God will reason with you about them. "Come now, let us reason together". He will knock on your door and say, Let me in. I will talk to you about it. You can talk to God about your sins. Christ is in glory, the work has been done, He is there in glory's heights, seated at the right hand of God. That is where the Redeemer is sitting. He is looking down here, looking for the results of the great work that He has accomplished, the work of redemption. He is looking for results in your heart and in mine. Do you trust Him? Do you know Him as your Saviour? Have you confessed Him as your Lord? Can you say like Job of old, "I know that my Redeemer liveth", Job 19: 25. Most of us here know it. How wonderful it is! What a Redeemer He is! What affection He has!

Boaz speaks to Ruth in that way. Chapter 4 is the chapter of redemption but I read about how Ruth came under the influence of Boaz. Boaz noticed her. He gives her great credit. She says, "I am a foreigner". She did not take any ground. There was no confession on her part. She was a Moabitess, a foreigner. She took a lowly place. But what does Boaz say? He says, "It has fully been shewn me, all that thou hast done to thy mother-inlaw ... and how thou hast left thy father..." and so on. That was true of Ruth. She clung to Naomi. "Jehovah recompense thy work, and let thy reward be full..." God will give you full credit. That is why I read that. God will give you full credit for your coming here tonight, or for any part you might have.

Then it says, "And Boaz went up to the gate..." I think he saw that this was something that he was going to have for himself, and that is what the work of redemption secures. Boaz takes up the man who had the right to redeem, "he that had the right of redemption, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by". And he said, You sit down here until we talk this over. And he took ten men to witness what had been done, and so on. And the man, he would not do it. He was going to do it, and then when Boaz said to him, You have not only to redeem it but "if thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not

redeem, tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem besides thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. And Boaz said, On the day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance". There was not only the question of redeeming the title, but there was a question of maintaining life, and the man was not prepared for that. The man is a type of the law; "For what the law could not do...", Rom 8: 3. There is what the law could not do. It cannot redeem. There was nothing wrong with the law, but the law could not redeem man to God because of the fallen nature of man. The law could not redeem man, but there is a Redeemer. Here is the Redeemer, and it says of him, "Now this was the custom ... a man drew off his sandal, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was the mode of attestation in Israel. And he that had the right of redemption said to Boaz, Buy for thyself; and he drew off his sandal". We think of the footsteps of Jesus, of the stoop of Jesus! He came down. He moved from glory's height. As we often quote, "he, being rich, became poor...", 2 Cor 8: 9. Think of Him becoming poor! Think of the stoop down from glory's heights into this world of sin and woe. I think the Spirit would refer us to that, the stoop of Jesus. The scripture affected me as I read it, the movements of Jesus, the Redeemer. We love to trace His footprints here amidst the desert sand, day by day, moment by moment, every moment pleasing to the heart of His God and Father. And so Boaz redeems Ruth and he has full title to her. He not only has the legal title, but he has the moral title. Oh that is a wonderful thing, not only legally, on account of the law. It has all been done legally, but it has been done morally. Jesus has come into this scene and established the basis legally and morally. And how did He do it? He established it on the cross when He took on the whole question of sin, when redemption was accomplished, when Jesus died. They slew Him: wicked hands took Him. A wicked hand took a spear and pierced His side when He was dead. What does the hymn say:

"Though man in hatred pierced Thy side,
Thy blood love's answer gave" (Hymn 230)

Think of the immediacy of the answer! Immediately there came out from the side of Christ blood and water. Think of the witness there was to that! And then He was put in the grave and then raised from the grave by the glory of the Father! Redemption had been accomplished.

That is why I read in Revelation: "And they sing a new song, saying, 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..." That is what Jesus has done, the great work of redemption. He has redeemed to God what was lost through sin. He has redeemed it by the shedding of His precious blood. Does it mean anything to your heart, the blood of Jesus, shed on Calvary's cross,

"Shed for rebels, shed for sinners,
Shed for me"? (Hymn 167)

Can you say like Peter 'precious blood'? Peter says, "... ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver or gold ... but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish...", 1 Pet 1: 18,19. Oh, how true that is! That is the Redeemer. Is He your Redeemer? Do you know Him as your Redeemer? Are you a believer? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? These are the questions the preacher would ask tonight, simple questions, how real they are!

We come time and time again to the gospel. I love to hear the gospel. I love to finish the day with the gospel: "God's glad tidings ... concerning his Son ... Jesus Christ our Lord", Rom 1: 1-4. Do you love to hear the gospel? Do you like to hear about the Redeemer? One day you are going to meet Him. One day you are going to be like Him. Is it so with everyone here? Oh that it were so for the whole of Kirkcaldy! A basis has been laid. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His death, has made a righteous, holy God propitious. John tells us that, that Jesus Christ "is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. The Redeemer has done it and has made God propitious, God ready to forgive, to come out in grace.

But the Lord Jesus is not only a propitiation for our sins, but He has been the Substitute. He has taken my sins in His body. Has He been your Substitute? Can you say He has been your Substitute, that you should have been there, I should have been there, that should have been me that died as a result of my sins? You say, Well, I am not all that bad a sinner. Dear friend, you are born in sin. The Bible tells you that all have sinned. There is not one person who can say that they have never committed a sin and one sin would bar you from heaven eternally. The Redeemer has shed His blood that your sins might be for ever removed. He has borne the penalty. He has borne the cost. He has taken it all away. Leviticus 16 tells you that. He is not only the propitiation, the blood on the altar which makes God propitious, but the antitype of the animal that is sent into a country afar off, into a far off land where God can say, "... their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more", Heb 8: 12. How wonderful these truths are, propitiation and substitution. The Redeemer was both to those who believe. Is He your Substitute? He is the propitiation for God, but do you know Him as your Substitute? Do you know Him as your Redeemer? - "I know that my Redeemer liveth". He is up there now and we have been together today here in this place and in other places remembering Him in answer to His desire that He should be remembered and we have entered into the service of praise. The Supper is public: we love to remember Him, to show forth His death until He come, and surely He is coming soon. We believe that. That is how it should be in all our hearts. We look for His return. We are waiting for it, any moment, any day. We do not know when but He is coming and we show forth His death until He come, not only to come for us. (He is going to come and rapture those who are redeemed, those who have been bought by His precious blood and secured for Him now eternally. "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord", 1 Thess 4: 16,17). But He will come to reign. That is, we are showing forth His death, until He comes to take up His rights here in this world. Wonderful time! The Redeemer then will have His rights publicly

acknowledged by all. He will reign supreme, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Isaiah tells us: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" chap 9: 6. That is the day to come. We hold that in our affections for our Redeemer when He will come to take up His rights here. How wonderful! May every heart be thrilled by the return of Christ. He will come for us, but come with us again, come with us to reign. What a great day! Not in these bodies, bodies that are deteriorating every day, but in bodies of glory, like unto His own body of glory. Well, we have power here on the earth to be maintained. What a power we have! What a privilege we have. We have the power, the gift of One that is God Himself, the blessed Spirit of God who has been given to us. Think of the believer being indwelt by a divine Person. How it would preserve us in our day-by-day walk, the knowledge of the gift of the Holy Spirit. So you are maintained here in the light of the great work that the Redeemer has done, maintained here for His pleasure until He come. May it be so for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

9 July 1995

HE COMETH

"I come quickly." Blest assurance!
Lord! to meet Thee I arise,
'Tis Thine own - Thy special promise;
"Even so," my heart replies.
In this scene where all disown Thee,
I, a part of Thee, still roam;
Left to serve Thee here while list'ning,
For the "shout", to call me home.

Here, the tones of earthly voices
Long have died upon mine ear;
What a moment - gracious Saviour,
When *Thy* blessed voice I hear!
That same voice which by Thy Spirit
Oft my spirit's yearnings staid;
When Thou hast in wondrous favour
This poor heart Thy "mansion" made.

Then 'twill call me up to mansions
In the Father's house above,
There to know more deeply - fully –
All Thy glory, all Thy love.
Sure that shout of resurrection,
Like one chord of mingled tone,
Will sound forth in thrilling cadence
All of Thee we here have known.

In that joy of full communion
Each shall have his special part,
Each a spot, reserved, O Father,
In Thy house, and in Thy heart.
Every vessel brimming over
With its prize - the Christ of God;
Small and great in joy ungrudging
Thou, our centre, Holy Lord.

Now, Thy wisdom we are learning,
Now, by faith Thy glory see;

As we gaze, our hearts are filling,
Satisfied, O Lord, in Thee.
Then, when we reflect Thine image,
When Thy beauty nought shall hide,
Thou shalt see Thy soul's deep travail
And *Thy* heart be satisfied.

Come, Lord Jesus, claim Thy people,
Here we wait and watch for Thee;
Thy blest voice shall be the key-note
Of eternal jubilee.
Gath'ring us - Thine own creation
To Thyself in Thine abode;
Like Thee - with Thee - and for ever
Near Thy Father and Thy God.

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