

A RETURN TO SIMPLICITY

CONFERENCE OF BRETHREN

held at

“HIGH LEIGH,” HODDESDON

from

September 28th to October 1st, 1956

NOTES :

A reprint of " A New Testament Church in 1955 " having been called for, some remaining copies can be obtained (3/-, post free) from T. I. Wilson, 705 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex.

The next Conference will (D.V.) be held at SWANWICK (Derbyshire) from September 20th-23rd, 1957.

Subject : " Holiness unto the Lord ".

Particulars from :

S. F. WARREN
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FOREWORD

IN presenting this Report of a further Conference of Brethren the conveners would afresh express their grateful acknowledgment of the good hand of our God so manifestly upon the gatherings again held at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, in 1956. Upwards of 200 brethren from far and near dwelt together in harmony and sweet fellowship and "spake often to one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him".

No harsh word was uttered, though all exercised their freedom to express thoughts and convictions personally held by them. These were received with acquiescence on the one hand or forbearance on the other, as should be the case in any true conference of christians.

It was not the province of the conveners to restrain debate or direct it otherwise than as the programme dictated. No findings or conclusions were reached nor purposed, but prayerful guidance was diligently sought that God might be pleased so to direct our discussion that light and wisdom might be given that we might have the mind of Christ on matters of vital importance to us, both in our personal and assembly life in days to come. We are very conscious that our prayers were abundantly answered.

One other word. This volume is issued and should be read solely as a Report. It is not an expression of the views of the conveners, nor of the conference, but of the individual speakers who expressed them. If this is borne in mind it will obviate much well-meant but ill-directed criticism.

OPENING SESSION

Friday (7.30 p.m.)

MR. PERCY O. RUOFF (*Chairman*)

My first word is a word of very loving welcome to all who have come to "High Leigh" for this conference. I think the keynote to our meeting is to be found in Psalm 62. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He *only* is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence." There has been much prayer and preparation in regard to this conference, and, therefore, we know that God will move amongst us in answer to our prayers. This time of humiliation and intercession before God is, perhaps, the most important part of our assembling together. We have come to meet with God.

There are two things I would like to say. I think it is most important that we should be godly in behaviour. I do not mean that we should not be bright and cheerful all the time: I mean that our thoughts should be turned towards God all the time, then we may, indeed, expect that He will move among us in power. And let us manifest in our lives humility, humbleness of heart, and tender consideration for others. The psalmist says: "Pour out your hearts before Him." Let us tell God exactly what we feel concerning those matters that are affecting us. And as we pray I am sure we shall remember those who are charged with the important task of addressing us at this conference. May the Spirit of God rest upon those who hear as well as upon those who speak. "My soul wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from Him." If we do this we may be sure that God will visit His people, and perhaps in a way that we shall never forget; because He will, indeed, have met with us here, in grace and in power.

Then followed a period of prayer and intercession, after which the following address was given.

CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY

Address by

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN (*Sevenoaks*)

THE theme of our Conference this year is simplicity, and to-night I wish to say a few introductory words upon the subject. I refer you to the words of the apostle in 2 Cor. 1: 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

Simplicity and sincerity—such are the two qualities displayed by the Apostle Paul, and in which he rejoiced. He was, it is generally conceded, a man of outstanding learning and erudition. For nigh upon two thousand years men have pondered and studied, and written at length upon his words: and yet when he speaks of himself, he says: "Our rejoicing is this—in simplicity and sincerity . . . we have had our conversation in the world." And, indeed, these are the two prominent marks of a christian in all ages. He is simple, and he is sincere: and that stands in marked contrast to his arch enemy the Devil, who is subtle and a deceiver. For a christian is a simple believer, and a church is a simple community. And therein lies the arresting power of both. For a christian is a man wholly committed to Christ: and a church is a company of christians gathered to Christ. Both are simply and solely Christo-centric: and it is only upon such that the power of Christ can rest. Paul rejoiced and gloried in this fact. It was not always so with him. Formerly he gloried in many things: he "did many things". But now he had become a man of one thing. "For me to live is Christ." He was jealous for his converts that they also might be, and continue the same. He feared lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For that is the great peril that attends both a christian believer and a christian Church.

It is that which happened to the human race at its very beginning when the serpent beguiled Eve. It has ever been the main purpose of the Devil to corrupt the simplicity that is man's outstanding quality in the purpose of God. How simple was man fresh from the hand of his Maker! He had a life of perfect unsullied fellowship with God. God was all in all to him. He had no other consideration, or ambition, but to live his life in harmony with his Creator. No thought of evil entered his mind. The distinction between good and evil was unknown to him. "His eye was single: his whole body was full of light." And it was this simplicity that the Serpent sought to corrupt. His subtle method was to tempt man to seek knowledge as an end in itself. "Ye shall be as gods knowing. . . ." And with knowledge came complexity in place of simplicity. Henceforth life became, and has become increasingly complex as man has acquired increasing knowledge. Men have run to and fro in the earth, and knowledge has increased. God made man upright, and he sought out many inventions which have estranged him more and more from God—as we see to-day.

See how complexity spread. First of all, it was a matter of clothing. Man began to take thought for raiment. Then there was the founding of a city: there was the development of the complexity of life lived in a community, in large settlements, which we call cities. Then there was language: and the confusion of tongues, leading to nations arising, which led inevitably to wars. And so it has gone on. And we take up our papers to-day and read of a terrifying bomb that has again been let loose upon the earth. Every additional acquisition of knowledge has brought with it additional corruption.

Now the triumph of the gospel is that it restores to man the prospect of a life of simple fellowship with God that he lost at the Fall. Once more he may become a man of one thing. Indeed, the more Christ-like a man becomes the simpler he assuredly is. A saint is a very simple person. And against this new creation of God the Devil has levelled the same subtle attack by the same method he employed at the first creation, and with the same object—to destroy man's fellowship with God, and to bring him into bondage to himself. Moreover, it is the same attack by the same methods that he employs against that new creation of God, the Church which is His

Body. Trace the history of the Church of God down the centuries, and it is the same story throughout. What was its character at its first emergence? One of almost unbelievable simplicity. Contrast it with the Jewish religion with its complexity of ordinances, feasts, fast-days, its priestly class, its inhibitions and rules, its "taste not, touch not, handle not", its multiplicity of additions by succeeding generations, adding burdens grievous to be borne. All this can hardly be appreciated by the modern mind, and yet it was of the very essence of the Hebrew conception of religion. And all this was suddenly and completely abandoned at Pentecost. It was an astonishing emancipation. No wonder the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Everything was changed. The things they had counted gain, they counted loss for Christ. All went, and Christ took their place as all and in all.

It was the same with the Church as with the individual. A new thing had come into being : radically different, not only from every religion, but from every association of man that had ever existed. Old things had passed away, all things had become new. Consider what it was. See how simple a thing had come to pass. It had not been organized. It had not been conceived by the mind of man at all. It was there, just *there*. It was without a constitution. It had no registered membership. It lacked rules of any kind. It was even without any formulated creed. (Has it ever struck you as a very astonishing and remarkable thing that the Bible contains nowhere a comprehensive Christian creed?) It had no set form of worship. It had no rubrics. There was no priesthood, nor official leader of worship. And yet it not only existed, but it existed in demonstration of power that set the world wondering. What constituted it a Church in the absence of all these things? Was it not merely a loose concourse of people, a mob without distinguishing character? On the contrary, its members were clearly recognizable to one another, and to the world. There was a bond of closest union between them. They were all one in Christ. Certainly two ordinances were observed by them : yet these ordinances were so simple in character as to be far removed from any thought of ritual. They baptized converts, yes, but they baptized one another : there was no official rite of baptism. Philip baptized the eunuch : and Ananias baptized Saul of Tarsus.

They met for the "breaking of bread", but it was from house to house, regardless of special days, or times, or procedures. And all believers were equally welcomed if they adjudged themselves worthy. And they ministered to one another for mutual edification. Such was the Church of God as it came fresh from the hand of God : as simple and single-hearted as was Adam at his creation. In fact, it was God's new creation, unspoiled, unsullied, as God intended it to be.

Now mark its history. What wonderful first days ! It must have been like heaven upon earth. No wonder believers were attracted : no wonder a multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith, forsaking their priesthood, and revelling in their new-found liberty. But note carefully one thing. They were *a Church* as distinct from free-lance believers scattered everywhere. From the first they "were together". They assembled in companies as the Jews had always done in synagogues (which has been, and still is all down their history, the secret of their survival as a nation). And those assemblies of the believers gave them cohesion under every kind of strain. And now watch the Serpent as, with subtlety, he proceeds to attack this simplicity which was the root of their fellowship. First came the Judaizers, seeking to spy out their new-found liberty, and bring them into bondage, to whom Paul gave place—no, not for an hour. (I wish Paul were with us now !) Then came Diotrophes, and many like him, who sought pre-eminence, and to lord it over the Church. Then bishops became a ruling class, and a priesthood crept in : and there was clerisy. Baptism and the Lord's Supper in course of time became sacraments administered by priests, so adding greatly to their power over the laity. And with the simplicity departed, mark you, the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Said one of the Popes, as he showed the priceless treasures of the Vatican to a visitor, "We have no need to say with the Apostle Peter : 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," said the visitor, "neither can you say, 'Arise and walk'" ! Constantine made Christianity what God never intended it to be, a State religion, which exchanged the glory of God in the Church for the pomp and the circumstance of the world.

But throughout this departure the true Church survived. The Spirit was at work, and His presence was manifested by

periodic returns to the simplicity that is in Christ. Every spiritual revival has been marked by just that very thing—a return to simplicity. It has accompanied every spiritual revival throughout history. Back to simplicity again and again, yet every fresh manifestation of the Spirit in the Church restoring its character of simplicity has been succeeded, alas, by fresh opposition from the same subtle enemy, and for the same end. Thus the history of the Church has been throughout, like the history of Israel, one of perpetual departure and return alternating. And there has been the same conflict between spiritual simplicity and carnal complexity: the same recurring warfare—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; the same need to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free; the same resistance to those who would bring her into bondage; the same urge to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: and to “mark them that cause divisions”, and to avoid them. We have no need to argue, still less to quarrel. No, said Christ, “let them alone,” and we find that His way is always best.

What, then, is the nature of christian simplicity? It is something far removed from childish immaturity. The christian is childlike, but he is not childish. When he becomes “a man in Christ” he puts away childish things, such as ignorance, and indolence, and indifference, which are the three main marks of infancy. A child does not know: it does not care: it does not think; it knows nothing of duty or responsibility. The believer retains his childlike simplicity while discarding the childish things that mark not only children, but unsaved people generally. For the unbeliever is ignorant of the ways of God: he is indolent as to the will of God: and he is completely indifferent to the claims of God. But the believer grows in grace, and in the knowledge of God. He searches the deep things of God. He conforms his life to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Think of the simplicity of a little child. Jesus said: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God.” We have to get back there again and again, and say: “Blessed Lord, I am but a child. I know not how to go out, or how to come in. Teach Thou me.”

What is this simplicity? It is the simplicity *that is in Christ*. How simple was Jesus in His life on earth! His mode of living was free of all those things which men seek after as essential to their comfort and well-being. Money, and houses, and lands, and possessions, and pleasures, and ambitions—all meant nothing to Him. He was the most possessionless Man that ever lived. He took no thought for His life, what He should eat or drink, “after which things the Gentiles seek”. He took no thought for the morrow, living His simple life one day at a time. How simple was His life, and how simple was His teaching! He used the simplest language so that the common people heard Him gladly. He talked of things they understood, and used illustrations from the common things of their lives. Such was the simplicity that was in Christ. And yet it was a simplicity far removed from shallowness. His life, though simple, was deep with purpose, and devotion, and prayer: and His teaching, though plain, was profound with a depth of meaning which has challenged the minds and souls of men for all time. Such also is the simplicity of the believer. He is a man of one thing, and that one thing is “that he may win Christ”, that he “may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death”, “that he may attain unto the resurrection of the dead”, “that he may apprehend that for which he has been apprehended of Christ Jesus”. The believer, as depicted in Scripture, is no shallow, complacent person. He is a man who digs deep, and dwells deep, and seeks to learn the great mystery of godliness. Such also is the simplicity of the Church. It is a Church of “one thing”. As to Paul, so to the Church—to live is Christ. Of itself it is nothing at all. It does not exist for the purpose of itself. *It has no separate life apart from Christ*. “To build up the local church” is a term foreign to Scripture. To introduce rules, and inhibitions, and restrictions with a view to conformity to a preconceived pattern is to depart from the original simplicity, and to corrupt it. The Church is a simple gathering of simple believers around the person of their Lord. Yet here again simplicity is far removed from shallowness. There is no gathering on earth that makes greater demands upon those who gather. Its very simplicity imposes a challenge upon its members to worship in spirit and in truth:

for if the Church is not spiritual it is nothing. It has no other resources, and becomes as salt which has lost its savour, and its ministry as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal. It is to safeguard, and, possibly, to help to restore this simplicity, both as regards ourselves gathered here, and the assemblies that we represent, that this conference is convened.

The remainder of the session was devoted to humiliation and prayer.

Saturday (9.45 a.m.)

MR. PERCY O. RUOFF (*Chairman*)

SIMPLICITY OF ASSEMBLY

Address by

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY (Purley)

THE commission of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples was to preach the gospel. The fruit of that gospel was found in groups of disciples of Christ, people marked by faith and love—faith in Christ, and love for one another. They were ruled by His new commandment : “ By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Their corporate life arose from their common life in Christ : being in union with Him, they were *one* in Him also. The nature of the Church is illustrated by the imagery of the mystical Body of Christ.

The rending of the vail at the death of Christ marked the end, in the divine economy, of ceremonial worship. The New Testament churches were marked by a simplicity that was almost stark, when compared with Old Testament times. Their services were modelled upon the synagogue rather than the temple services. The Lord’s early teaching concerning life in a local church shows the church in its simplest essence, a gathering of people around the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18: 20). The context of the passage, however, points to much else of importance : it indicates the life of a spiritual brotherhood and some possible problems arising from the ever-present human element. The importance of Christian unity is found in the steps to be taken to bring estranged persons together. The spirit of forgiveness, significantly taught in the immediate context (vv. 21 ff.) is seen as a constant requirement if fellowship is to be maintained in fulness. In this context, then, is the reference to meeting in Christ’s Name. The words were never intended by the Lord as a party label, to be appropriated by some christians to the exclusion of all others. They were meant to be a comfort, and a challenge, for those who fulfilled the conditions for their enjoyment.

In New Testament times a quorum of ten Jewish men was required before a synagogue could be formed. It was commonly believed that they could then count upon the divine Presence, Jehovah would dwell among them. The clear statement of the Lord Jesus showed that the smallest number possible to make a group ("two or three") would have that Presence. The words of this text have sometimes been misinterpreted and have been regarded, perhaps, almost as a religious slogan, as though to be "gathered" is a permanent state irrespective of spiritual condition. The late Harold P. Barker once wrote a booklet to show the error of this outlook, and he pointed out that to omit the word "together" is to misquote the text.

To be gathered together in His Name means to meet with Christ's authority for our gathering. It means to meet as representing His interests among men. It means to come together as those who reflect, in some measure, the character of our Lord. When men and women who have some likeness to Christ meet with His authority for so doing, that they may truly represent Him and His interests among their fellows, there, surely, will the gracious promise be fulfilled in power: "There am I in the midst of them." There will be a simplicity of spirit and of form—of spirit, as Christians who so meet will be free from all bondage in heart and mind: and of form, because they will require nothing of mere externalism to support their life or to keep alive their gatherings.

However great may be the spirit of simplicity and fellowship in such a community, it must have some way of managing its affairs, some framework of order. It is not out of place, therefore, to enquire how these early Christian churches looked after their affairs, both spiritual and temporal. We shall consider these in inverse order. But first let us review the question of leadership in general among God's people. There can be no doubt that the first days required and possessed men whose leadership extended beyond the confines of local churches. The apostolic circle included many men, other than the actual apostles, who were spiritual leaders, sometimes serving over a wide area. There always have been men of high spiritual calibre who have been recognized widely in the churches for their work's sake, and whose words have sometimes carried the saints forward into fresh advances for Christ

and His gospel. Such men were Timothy, Titus, Apollos and others—and they have their place to-day.

As to the temporal side of the affairs of the early communities, the material and physical needs of the saints were looked after in Jerusalem from the first. At a much later date Paul affirms his zeal in his care for the poor (Gal. 2: 10). His desire that the “collection for the saints” should be furthered in the Gentile churches was intense, as in this he saw a symbol of his teaching of the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ, and such a contribution from Gentiles to Jews would seal home the reality of this truth. Material matters were important because—apart from the actual reason of need—their proper regulation would always strengthen spiritual bonds. In a wondrous way, the earthly can be used, under God, to reinforce heavenly truth!

Widows were cared for in apostolic times, and a specific order of widows is found in the churches. The poor and needy in general were not forgotten and provision was made for them by the church. And though these were temporal matters, spiritual qualities were essential for such ministries. The careful selection of the first almoners seen in Acts 6 demonstrates the necessity for God’s service being conducted only by spiritual persons, even when it may be mundane matters that are in question.

The spiritual care of the churches was undertaken by elders. The terms used of these men show the nature of their ministry. It has been said that eldership is a work, not an office: my personal judgment is that eldership is both an office *and* a work, and that the elder will function the better if he is suitably established in the fellowship of his brethren and of the whole church. The word “elder” does not necessarily mean an old man. Elders in Israel would normally include the older men of the tribes, but elders in the apostolic churches would be drawn from the available man-power among the converts. The word refers mainly to the person and spiritual seniority of the elder. The word “bishop”, which is better translated “overseer”, refers to the function of the elder. The standard set for bishops is high, and while the listing of their requisite qualities would act as a deterrent to the unsuitable, it would present a constant challenge to godly elders as they kept the standard before them in life and ministry.

The sphere of the elder's service is the local church, and his authority is seen to be moral and spiritual : a man of spiritual weight will exercise an influence for good wherever he labours. His ministry is no sinecure : it involves the general discipline of a church, that is, its spiritual training and ordering—it covers the care of all the flock.

The elders are spoken of in pastoral language : they are shepherds, and they labour in association with the Chief Shepherd. When He appears He will reward His faithful under-shepherds, but meanwhile He cares for His people through them. Such a thought should dignify the whole conception of eldership, and should stimulate fidelity to Christ as the elders shoulder the burden of the churches. They do not act alone: their Lord is working with them, as in ancient times in evangelism (Mark 16: 20). And He is Chief Shepherd: His interest is always greater than theirs, therefore He can lead and guide their thoughts and actions in the discharge of their responsibilities to God and to His people.

The apostolic churches were each autonomous, no parent or metropolitan church had any jurisdiction beyond its own borders. Once a local church was established, it maintained its own life and order without any necessity to refer to other or larger churches. This is not to say that good counsel might not be sought from others, but that no outsiders had any right to interfere in the internal affairs of local churches. The internal sovereignty of churches was thus preserved, and their direct dependence upon the Lord could be maintained. This simple principle has often been found a safeguard to preserve the very life of an assembly of Christians. Its outworking historically and in modern times is sufficient evidence of its wisdom.

In all this necessary arrangement an essential simplicity can be discerned—in the constitution of the churches ; in their fellowship ; in every aspect of their leadership and order, whether as touching things directly spiritual or their temporal requirements.

Their final authority was the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit. Even as it was the word of Christ that first sketched a picture of local congregations of His disciples (Matt. 18), so it is His Word, preserved in Holy Writ, that was acknowledged as authoritative and supreme, and to which

they were commended (Acts 20: 32). The final authority of the churches is always "God, and the Word of His grace". How richly endowed is any church that may call upon His Name, and hear His voice through the Scriptures! The supremacy of Scripture in the church will mean a simple bowing to its teaching as it is proclaimed among the saints. Therein will be found the true control of the Holy Spirit: He will make His will known through the Word, and His guidance will be evidenced in men of God acting in accordance with what is written in Scripture.

Here is a simplicity which is universally workable. And it will mean the fulfilment of discipleship, for in this life of fellowship, brotherhood and order will be fulfilled the words of the Lord: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

(10.30 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.)

DISCUSSION

MR. G. W. ROBSON (Streatham): I would like to refer to two aspects of pastoral visitation. A great deal of ministry is conducted by travelling from one assembly to another, and some who are undoubtedly gifted as pastoral visitors are away for a great part of their time in ministry or gospel preaching elsewhere. Those to whom we might look for pastoral care are in the local church for the least time. By way of contrast, we see established around us a general system in which one officer in the church is a paid full-time pastor. One often observes a prosperity in gospel witness amongst those companies who practise the latter method. Is there some weakness in our dissipated and scattered ministry? Have we not under-estimated the proper place of the local full-time pastor?

MR. P. O. RUOFF (Chairman): That is very important. Anyone who has done pastoral work will know it pays 100%; but a principal thing in pastoral visitation, in my judgment, is that it must not be hurried or formal. Mr. Robson has been saying very pertinently that there are some persons supposed to do this kind of work who are absent as preachers; but ought it not to be the desire of all elders and others, "How can I put in some little word that will help this sick person, or this person

who needs a little guidance? ” If that was upon our hearts I think we should find it effective.

MR. F. A. ADAMS (Norwich) : Does it not say in Scripture, that they that preach the gospel live by the gospel? If more were supported for the whole-time ministry of the gospel many unpaid ministering brethren would be enabled to spend time in building up their own churches.

MR. P. O. RUOFF : The late Mr. Alexander Stewart made a remark I have never forgotten. He said that if Brethren as such (I use the term for the sake of convenience) had pastors set apart not so labelled, but who did the work of pastors, they would have swept the country, so rapidly would the movement have grown. I think this vital point should be recognized and if possible remedied.

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY (Purley) : When I was in the United States recently, I came across places where assemblies were prospering very much, and the work was making quite distinct progress. There had been an almost revolutionary change in their arrangement for the Lord's day : in many places it had the most marked success. Some of the suggestions that have been made here at High Leigh from time to time seem already in operation in the United States. I heard of assemblies in the Southern States, where brethren have built up a work based on their own evangelism and which are prosperous assemblies receiving the care of brethren who remain and stay with them for a protracted period. Perhaps it would be helpful to us if Mr. John Smart would say something on this subject.

MR. JOHN SMART (New Jersey, U.S.A.) : Regarding the great changes to which Mr. Howley has alluded, he probably has in mind what is commonly known as the Family Bible Hour. This consists in some re-ordering of the Lord's day services. In practically all, but not every, instance, the "breaking of bread" is observed at 9.15 or 9.30 in the morning, the actual breaking of bread is at approximately 10.30. Then an interval to get home, to pick up children, or other people, for the Family Bible Hour. This does not hold in every place. About 11 o'clock the Family Bible Hour is arranged, and we have in the main auditorium hall or chapel

a public preaching of the Word of God, not necessarily 100% evangelistic. There may be an exposition of an entire chapter and a clear preaching of the gospel, for those who are adult. In the lower auditorium the children are assembled : classes for everyone from tots to teenagers, and then adults in another room. There is something for everyone at that time. On the whole, I think the Family Bible Hour must be credited with having introduced to our life in the United States and in Canada quite an upsurge, particularly in the U.S.A. America does not go to church on Sunday nights : they go at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning. We get the people then, or not at all. That does not quite hold in Canada : there are many places there where you get them on Sunday night rather than the morning. This re-drafting of the programme on the Lord's day has shown good results in reaching the community round about.

In the Southern States, the Piedmont area of the State of North Carolina, a number of Canadians have gone there. An outstanding Canadian evangelist, Lester Wilson, went to the State of North Carolina, and did an outstanding work of evangelism. He also did splendid work in the larger centres of that State. When Mr. Wilson was through, it was not uncommon to have thirty-five or forty souls brought to Christ in the recent weeks, a good company, by reason of the methods on which he operated, including some of the finer elements of the city, professional and business men, and so on. As he made preparations to go on elsewhere in evangelism, Mr. Wilson would arrange to have someone associate himself with the new assembly, and remain there until such time as they were on their feet, after the pattern of Paul helping the churches on their feet. Work has been carried on in that line in quite a number of assemblies in North Carolina.

MR. J. MCCARTHY (Bromley) : May I read a Scripture we are all familiar with : " The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder . . . feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof " (1 Peter 5: 1, 2). Surely an elder is a brother who is localized. Therefore it is his responsibility under God to see to the welfare of the flock, as it is the responsibility of the father to see to the welfare of his family.

MR. J. MCPHERSON (Glasgow) : Has not Mr. Howley himself indicated the cause and also the cure of this particular matter where our local elders engage in teaching ministry elsewhere? He pointed out that there were men who were gifted to exercise a large and general ministry, and those gifted to exercise a more particular or local ministry. It seems to me that some brethren are trying to do two jobs at once, and it occurs to me that the teaching of the Word and the confirmation of early church history may suggest that these two particular tasks are better regarded separately.

MR. J. WARD (Wimbledon) : What is the type and character of the leadership in a simple New Testament church, in view of the type and character of spiritual leadership which we see in communities of Christians all around us where they have ordained pastors or ministers who devote themselves fully and entirely to a growing and expanding work with a dynamic leadership, and where souls are being saved every week?

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY : This is a matter which has given us a great deal of concern, especially in areas where we have seen such dynamic leadership in other circles and found it missing from our own. We can only seek to come to a clear understanding of what should be characterizing our spiritual leaders, and wait upon God that He will help us. How it can be produced is partly through the training of young men to right understanding of Scripture : to implant in their hearts by teaching and instruction, and fellowship, something of a spiritual vision. This can be done by maintaining high standards in the local assembly, so that young men may develop high standards.

I remember when I was young a group of most gifted men of God ministering the Word round about London. This raised high ideals in one's mind. There were assemblies I coveted to visit because I felt there was an atmosphere there, and the ministry was of the finest. Those days brought me a very great blessing. There was leadership there, and a spirit of reverence and awe in the meetings, respect for those in authority. What is needed, surely, in our leaders, is that we have men of vision. The person of vision who can implant that vision in the minds of others, is required, a man who should have scope. Sometimes men of ability and leadership

have been held back. Those whom God raises up should be encouraged. They will endeavour to implant a forward vision in the minds of the people of God. We are not always to be looking back, we are to be looking forward. As leaders seek to function like that, surely there will spring up in that assembly, sometimes even over a wider area, in a whole locality, a spiritual succession with a new feeling of responsibility, a sense of expectancy in the service of God, that God will do things. We do not always expect God to bless us. Those who expect a blessing will get it.

(11.45 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.)

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

MR. P. O. RUOFF : There has been intriguing reference to the synagogue service and what grew out of it. Perhaps Mr. Howley might start with that.

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY : The normal worship in which a Jew was brought up was the elaborate ceremonial of the temple services to which he went from time to time. Each local community had its synagogue, a product of the post-Captivity period and the synagogues were governed by elders. They had, when they were in session, a ruler in charge, and an assistant to the ruler. There was a simple service at which they would sing Psalms and read from the Law. At a later stage there would be a reading from the Prophets. The service consisted of the worship of Jehovah by the singing of Psalms and the reading of the Word of God, followed by exhortation, or exposition. That exhortation or exposition was usually based upon the commentaries of the Rabbis. When Our Lord first began to speak of community life amongst His disciples, they would conjure up in their minds a picture of synagogue life, because it was the thing they knew. Obviously they would not think of the temple ritual because He said nothing to associate their minds with that. They would think of the simpler form of local service.

When the Christian communities came into existence there were slight variations, but the pattern was largely similar : praise and worship of God, as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. There would be reading and exposition of the Word of God for

mutual edification. The pattern was similar, but with many developments, and, of course, with this difference, that each local church was an active witnessing community—"From you sounded out the Word of the Lord."

MR. H. F. R. CATHERWOOD (Ealing) : There is a general feeling that there ought to be a regular ministry and of a higher standard, perhaps on Sunday mornings. That can only come about through the elders of the local churches, who are ultimately responsible.

MR. F. N. MARTIN (Edgware) : The primary requirement in an elder is humility. He is only fit to rule if and so long as he is humble ; but that does not mean he is subservient and weak. His work is particularly consistent with godly rule and the exercise of authority.

It is within the duties of an elder to train young men in the assembly. I think there can be no question that it is our duty to act, if I may use a colloquial term, as talent-spotters, to detect budding gift, and encourage and develop it. It seems to me that the elders must all the time be watchful to detect the presence of anything that is militating against the spiritual development of the church, and be ready to step in at once, sharply and with authority, an authority that is based on the respect that christians have for them, for what they are, not by virtue of office, but by virtue of being holy men of God.

MR. S. F. WARREN (Gravesend) : The two things before us are the character of the elders and the need for pastoral work. Is it not the case that most of us who do pastoral work are driven to it? We visit because someone is ill, because of a bereavement, or because someone has fallen out with someone else. Are we not missing the point? If we did it as a ministry, put it down in our diaries as a commitment, and dropped in for five or ten minutes, it is surprising how many homes one can visit in an evening.

MR. W. S. LOYNES (Loughton) : Is not the matter one of devotion? One cannot help thinking one has a very close link with John 21 when Peter, who was also an elder, was challenged by his Lord, "Lovest thou Me?", as a real characterization of the elder.

MR. RANSOME COOPER (Eastbourne) : Mr. A. J. Holiday, of

Bradford, used so to visit that all in the assembly knew not only the day when he called, but the hour to expect him. They would be ready ; and within a few minutes of his arrival Bibles would be out and there would be a time spent in helping the whole family. Then he would go on elsewhere. The result was a splendid meeting, and a very large Sunday School.

MR. D. L. CLIFFORD (Dawlish) : These are very busy days in which we live. The christian business man in the assembly has to spend a lot of time in his business, to make the thing go. How can an assembly elder fence off several hours each week, first of all for Bible study, so that he may be apt to teach in his own assembly, and also give several hours every week for regular visitation work ? It is an impossibility that we are facing. We need full-time workers, supported by the local saints, to do the work they themselves cannot do. It will not be one of ministry but of spending time in pastoral work.

MR. J. SMART (New Jersey, U.S.A.) : As to the question of pastoral visitation, we all realize the tremendous necessity for it, and it is certainly out of the question for any two or three or six members of the assembly to assume responsibility for it. If God has given a man a burden for the ministry of the Word of God, the serving of tables ought to be done by other brethren. It is unreasonable to expect a group to do the whole thing. There is a call for greater burden on the part of all. I am suspicious of the tendency to throw responsibilities wholly on certain shoulders. There should be real brotherhood in relation to all these matters.

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY : The assembly is ruled by a plurality of elders, and it should be pointed out that 1 Tim. 5: 17, 18 obviously gives authority for believing that in the church at Ephesus, which was a large assembly probably with several hundred people, there were certain persons who gave their time to labouring in the Word and teaching. That they might do it properly, they were able to set aside business cares, and were supported by the church. " Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and doctrine." For the Scripture says, " Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." And, " The labourer is worthy of his reward " (1 Tim. 5: 17, 18). The " double honour " refers not merely to the

honour of words or a general spirit of esteem, but an esteem that shows itself in a practical contribution to the support of those brethren. In the case of Ephesus, there may have been two or three, or more ; we are not told. In a smaller assembly there might be one brother who for a time would labour like that.

MR. L. E. PERKINS (Croydon) : Elders have a grave responsibility to the Lord. May I read the Scripture, Heb. 13: 17? "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. . . ." That is the atmosphere in which our elders should render their service, and in which all of us should render whatever service we render to the Lord.

MR. J. W. LAING (Mill Hill) : The method we work on is that if we see a brother doing the work of an elder, we recognize him as such, and invite him to the monthly Oversight meeting. In our assembly we have over 200 in fellowship and there are ten or eleven elders. The different members of the assembly are allocated, some to one elder, some to another ; each is responsible for prayer and care for a certain number, so as to divide the work of the elders. Then each month there is a report at the Oversight meeting, if any are sick, or needing help, and it is working fairly well.

MR. SPENCER D. THOMAS (Sheffield) : Does it not cast a slight on other elder brothers if they permit someone not called to the work to function as an elder brother ? In 1 Tim. 3 the qualifications are given, not for a man to judge himself, but for his brothers to judge him.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL (Leven) : There is a danger of confusing the functions of pastor and teacher. If we think of a pastor who is supported by the assembly who is also doing the teaching, it would be unique if that person had the capacity to teach as well as act in a pastoral way. It is very rare, in my experience, that one person embodies those two functions. I have known people exercising the work of a pastor who were scarcely ever seen on the platform.

MR. D. G. CASSWELL (Balham) : We have to face up to a practical difficulty. This question of pastoral care is so important, and we have lost much ground in recent years. It

is a spiritual work ; we prepare to take a meeting, we should prepare before God before visiting people's homes. A lady upon whom I called said to me, " Do come in. I am pleased to see you, but I never want to see anyone from the assembly again." She had a sense of being neglected.

I have been visiting a lady in hospital week after week. I saw in her assembly leaflet that they thanked God for her recovery which they were sure was in answer to their prayers. She told me that not one of them had ever visited her in hospital.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : I am a little surprised that no emphasis has been brought to bear upon the fact that a pastor is just as definite a gift of the Holy Spirit as an evangelist and as a teacher, and that the work of a pastor is put on the same level as these other gifts of the Spirit as essential to the Church. I do not think we can give too much time to this matter, because I believe that this is at the root of the major troubles in our individual assemblies. I think what our assemblies are lacking are pastors.

I left the Congregational Church for an assembly where there were many gifted men whose names are amongst those who had been leaders of the assemblies during the past decade. I found also they had a pastor—a paid pastor. It was not his province to take the platform at all. He used to spend his time all the week visiting the flock ; not only the sick, but he would pay visits to all that he could. The elders would gather together and go through the names of those in fellowship. They would indicate that there was this one and that one who had not been in their midst the last few weeks, and the recognized pastor would go and make it his duty to do it. It was a very great assistance to the strengthening of that assembly, and to its general health.

I believe something like that would be very desirable where it is possible. Of course, in many cases it is certainly not possible. The work of the elders is the shepherding of the flock, and I have been a little surprised that no mention has been made at all of the equally Scriptural office of a deacon. I wonder why we never talk about deacons, and I wonder why it is that the elders are occupied with the temporal affairs of the assembly, and all the questions of the disposition of the

money, and all these practical matters, which seem to be very often their main concern. They meet together and they discuss what they call the business of the assembly. Whereas their real province as elders is a spiritual one, and they ought to be giving their concern to meeting together and praying over their flock, considering their spiritual condition, arranging for them to be visited, and pastoral care to be given to them. Until that has happened, I am quite sure many of our assemblies will never prosper.

One of the advantages of the appointment of deacons is just this : that you discover younger men of zeal and ability who may well in the future develop and have qualifications for an elder. Why should not those men be brought into the service of your assembly and recognized as for the time being deacons, who undertake all those things. They need not do it as a separate body : they may gather together with the elders.

MR. E. W. ROGERS (Gt. Bookham) : Does Mr. Goodman approve of deaconesses ? My reason is a serious one ; in the matter of elders no mention is made of their wives. In the matter of deacons there is the introduction of the word "wives" or "women". My view is that the Scripture provides for deacons and deaconesses in the local church.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : Most emphatically so. There is a very great ministry of women amongst the assembly. I am quite sure, whether appointed or not, a great many of them are doing it through their husbands !

Saturday (2.15 p.m.)

Chairman : MR. A. J. ATKINS (Bromley)

SIMPLICITY OF WORSHIP

“ One Thing is Needful ” (Luke 10: 42)

At this morning's session we had before us subjects of very great and practical importance, and this afternoon we have one we shall equally feel is of no less importance—Simplicity of Worship.

If we think of worship as including not only set occasions, but our individual worship, I think we shall agree that we can learn much at the feet of Christ that we can learn by no amount of intellectual study.

MR. E. W. ROGERS (Great Bookham)

THE subject that has been allotted to me for the afternoon is entitled “ Simplicity of Worship ”, and as the chairman has indicated, there are two ways in which that matter could be dealt with : first, we could have enlarged our consideration to have thought of individual worship—but I do not propose to pursue that line in view of the general tenor of the conference, although let me say quite plainly, if we are not daily spiritual worshippers we shall not be weekly spiritual worshippers. It is not any good living a careless life for six days a week and thinking that on Sunday we may come together in a spirit of worship, because you cannot jump into it immediately like that.

Yet as to the second, I am confronted with this difficulty : that, so far as I can see in the Scripture, nowhere is worship linked with the Lord's Supper. I do not mean to say it is not linked in our experience, but that it is not in statement of fact. We oftentimes say that when we are at the Lord's Supper we are exercising our priestly capacity in worship, but let us remember we are priests all the time, and not merely at the Lord's Supper. It is a remarkable thing that the apostle Paul is the only one who deals with that ordinance, and he

never deals with the question of christian priesthood, nor indeed does he ever use the word "worship" save in one solitary passage which is not relevant to the Lord's Supper. Yet every one of us knows well enough that when we are there to remember the Lord, we cannot fail to worship Him.

In consequence, I am not going to deal with the matter generally, but to concentrate upon worship and the Lord's Supper, having regard to the intimation on the programme that to-morrow there will be a meeting for worship and "breaking of bread". I take it, though I have not consulted the conveners, that the general idea in dealing with the subject of "simplicity of worship" is that I should say something touching worship in relation to the Lord's Supper.

When the Lord Jesus spoke of worship to the woman of Samaria, He emphasized three things : it must be spontaneous, spiritual and sincere. "God is spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." In making this statement the Lord Jesus was not making reference to the Lord's Supper ; it is a general statement pertaining to worship.

Furthermore, Paul, when he tells us in Phil. 3 that "we worship by the Spirit of God" (R.V.), has not in mind—at any rate so far as the text is concerned—either the institution of the Lord's Supper or its observance, but simply a general statement of fact that the characteristic of a christian is that he worships by the Spirit of God and not by a carnal code of rules.

I ask you, therefore, to consider the Scripture, so that we may see how it was done in the beginning, because as it was in the beginning so it should be to-day, possibly with modifications now, and all the time until the end. You will see the force of my remark about "with modifications" a little later. Let us turn to Luke 22, from v. 7, making comments as I proceed :

"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed." That "must" is significant, for not merely was it the ceremony of the Passover, but its anti-type *must* be killed—the Lord Jesus.

"And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him,

Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said unto them, behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in." It may be that this verse can be read allegorically, the water signifying the Scriptures of the truth, held by a man, some servant of God, who is used by the Spirit of God to instruct people as to where they should worship.

"And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?" Note the word "guestchamber". It is translated in chapter 2 by the word "inn". It is a word that in its root meaning has to do with the abandoning of working clothes and material, and giving oneself to rest and ease after labour. The Lord's Supper is an occasion when we "sit under His shadow with great delight", and "his fruit is sweet unto our taste". It is a place of rest, not a place of work.

"And he shall show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready." A large room, where "everyone that loves Thy Name is a welcome willing guest". We must not refuse anyone whom we know to be a real child of God, sound in the faith, godly in life, even though he does not conform in all things to our views. There should, of course, be wise supervision, lest any who are not of the "Household of faith" should seek admission.

It is an "upper room". Surely the spiritual sense here is that there should be such an atmosphere of worship that we are "transported by the Spirit's power into scenes where earth has no place". We all know that blessed experience at the Lord's Supper.

It is furnished; for we have all that is requisite, of which we shall have to speak in a few minutes. "There make ready"; they would purge the house of every trace of leaven. Every one of us should judge himself preparatory to the feast, and "so let him eat". Not that we should live carelessly for six days and then have a kind of sweeping-up self-judgment on Saturday night preparatory to Sunday morning. We should come to the Lord's Supper in a spirit of self-judgment, with no known, encouraged sin in our lives, either open or secret.

Let us read on, verse 13 : " And they went, and found as He had said unto them ; and they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him." " Jesus sat down." " With Jesus in the midst, we gather round the board." He is actually in the midst ; the church is a " habitation of God by His Spirit ", a dwelling place. " Do you not know," says Paul to the Corinthians, " that you, the church, are the sanctuary of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth among you ? " Writing the second letter to the Corinthians, he said, " Do you not know that Jesus Christ is among you ? " Peter uses some words that I have altered in my Bible. In the first chapter of his first epistle he says, " We were eye witnesses of his majesty " ; in my Bible I have altered the " h " and the " m " to capitals, " We were eye witnesses of His Majesty." I say it reverently, brethren, when we gather together at the Lord's Supper, as of course on other occasions when God's people come together, His Majesty is in the midst. We should have a consciousness that He is there, not as if we were in the presence of One Who is our Judge (although He is that) but in the presence of One Who truly loves us, and at Whose feet we fall in true and genuine worship. He is in the midst.

" When the hour was come He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him." Verse 15 : how important it is to be punctual !

" And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer : for I say unto you, I will not eat any more thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." That is, until Christ Himself, the antitype, has died.

" And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves : for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine." The vine is Israel, whom God brought out of Egypt, for which He so tenderly cared, looking for it to bring forth grapes, but it brought forth sour grapes.

" Until the Kingdom of God shall come." That is, when Israel is restored, in millennial days.

Then follows the Lord's Supper. " And He took bread (or, ' And He received a loaf ') and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is My Body which is given for

you ; this do in remembrance of Me." This do, as an act of remembering, or calling Me to mind.

The Lord was there, in His actual body. In His hands was the loaf, and thus when He said " This is My body ", He could not have meant that that loaf *was* His body. It represented, it stood for, and it would become the instrument of reminding them, during His absence, of His body.

" This do " does not, as expounded by some, signify the offering of a sacrifice, but " This do " means break this loaf and distribute it amongst yourselves as an act of calling Me to mind. It is not that the loaf is itself a mere memorial, it is the action that we do that calls Him to mind.

Further, verse 20 : " Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you." I was asked if I would meet some elder brethren somewhere in England because the local assemblies in that area were torn with strife as to whether it was scriptural to have a decanter on the table. Fancy having strife over such a small matter, but it was based upon the contention that this phrase here meant " which (cup) is being poured out for you ", implying that the cup must be actually poured out, for a proper remembrance. Of course, the manual act has no significance.

Now when you have that passage by itself, one might say, that is very interesting reading as an ancient document, but why do you say it applies to us to-day ? Then we might raise another question : This only related to eleven men, and all these eleven (or maybe twelve) men were Jews. Is this to be observed by both men and women, and if it is to be observed by men and women, should they be Jews and Jewesses, or may Gentiles be included as well ? We have yet to find out whether there is any other part of Scripture that will answer an enquiry like that.

Another question may be raised as to the procedure in the bodily absence of the Lord Jesus (admitting, of course, His spiritual presence) : to whom is entrusted the responsibility of the manual and audible parts of this institution ? By the manual I mean the initial breaking of the bread and the distribution of the cup ; by the audible parts I mean not merely the giving of thanks for each element, but also the ministry that certainly accompanied the institution as

originally given by the Lord Jesus. For you will remember in that upper room, both before and after the institution of the supper, there was what we might call nowadays verbal ministry given by the Lord Jesus. In His bodily absence, therefore, who is responsible to do the manual and the audible parts?

Another question: What about the rules as to excluding any, assuming that Judas was not present. Is there any guiding Scripture that would authorize us excluding from this congregational worship anyone, and what are the guiding rules?

The last question that might be raised is, Is there any time limit or any indication in the Scripture as to for how long it was to be observed?

Most of these questions you can answer, but let us go through them again. What right have we to apply the section to ourselves? 1 Cor. 11 gives the plain answer: "For I Paul received from the Lord" (not from the twelve apostles) "that which I delivered to you". These were the Corinthian christians, a company made up of men and women, and of Jews and Gentiles. This clearly indicates the extension of the worship of the Lord Jesus to a Gentile congregation made up of men and women.

As for the place: Where we may do it. May I ask you to turn to two passages which throw light upon the point: I have cited 1 Cor. 11 touching the extension of this institution to the Gentiles. Look at 1 Cor. 1: 2: "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Surely that expression "every place", an expression that governs the whole of the rest of this letter, making it applicable to christians at all times and in all places, is sufficient to justify the observance of the Lord's Supper in any place where there is a church.

And now let us turn to Acts 20. This is a very important passage, if for no other reason than this: I have regrettably met brethren who have dealt very ungraciously and severely with believers who desired to remember the Lord Jesus in a camp, such as a Bible camp, or an Army camp or a holiday camp, because there happened to be no assembly in the

particular spot. It has been said that they were not entitled (using their expression) "to set up a table". Indeed, there are some that would say it must never be done if you are on board ship, if for no other reason than that you have not a settled assembly on board ship. May I ask you to look with me at v. 5 of chapter 20 of Acts: "These going before tarried for us at Troas. . . ." v. 7: "And upon the first day of the week when we came together to break bread. . . ." Note this reading, which is supported by Mr. Darby's translation and the R.V.: "When *we* came together to break bread.' ' I cannot find any mention in Scripture of a church at Troas, and the silences of Scripture are important. But here is a company of God's people, itinerant missionaries, who find themselves in a certain place—Troas—and on the first day of the week, what was more natural than that they should come together to break bread? From 1 Cor. 1: 2 linked with chapter 11: 23ff and Acts 20: 7, I conclude that wherever believers are found together (even though they may not be a permanent assembly) in a place for the time being, they are a church in that place, and may therefore quite legitimately and scripturally observe the Lord's Supper.

As to the place, we have spoken. As to the time: Now on what day of the week are we to do it? I grant you freely that Acts 20: 7 seems to imply that they waited till the first day of the week, but it only seems to imply it. I grant you that 1 Cor. 16: 1 does imply that the saints came together on the first day of the week. I am not clear that the first day of the week is the "Lord's day" of Rev. 1. There does not seem sufficient justification to make that statement, but I am clear on this, that when Paul writes his revelation touching the matter in chapter 11, he says, "as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do announce the Lord's death till He come". I would not be prepared to say that a person who observed the Lord's supper with other believers on any day of the week other than the first was acting wrongly or unscripturally. "As often as" seems to justify the thought that as often as particular opportunities and desire so incline it may be done.

The next question I raised was as to procedure. Now may I make this perfectly plain? The brother who gives thanks for the bread and initially breaks it, and the brother who gives

thanks for the cup and initially passes it round, does not occupy a dual position in the sense that he is (1) one of the company and (2) the representative of the absent Lord. The brother who gives thanks for the bread and the cup does not stand in the position of a vicar or representative of Christ. He is but one of a company. If we ask the question, "who is to do the manual part?" the answer is this: "The bread which *we* break, the cup of blessing for which *we* give thanks"; in the matter of the Lord's supper we are all, in the matter of congregational worship, on the one level. What could be simpler, for after all, that is our topic: "The simplicity of worship." The place? Anywhere where you may be found. The time? Any time that may be appropriate. The procedure? So simple in the matter of the manual exercises, but what about the audible exercises? Now here we should have to turn—but time precludes it—to 1 Cor. 14. This gives principles for the guidance of a local assembly. That chapter in no wise relates to any other meeting than a church meeting or a local church meeting. It is the application of the principles of that chapter to so-called open conferences that has proved their ruin; that chapter does not relate to such meetings. But the chapter clearly does relate to a meeting such as the Lord's supper, "for how shall someone say 'amen' at thy *giving of thanks* if he does not understand what you are saying?" That is in that chapter. It seems clear from the chapter that every man, in contradistinction to women, should have the opportunity to express himself in worship, in praise, by the announcement of a hymn, and by the giving of an exhortation, and so on.

You will notice on the programme there is a reference to unfettered worship and unhurried waiting. I do not need to say much about that, because our minds go in right channels when we see those words. It is utterly unspiritual to "keep the pot boiling". On the other hand, it may be the result of worldliness, of emptiness, of sinfulness, of carelessness, if our lips are silent, and we have no word of praise for the Lord to help the company and to express their sentiments; if we have no word of the Lord in the Scripture to help and encourage them. Silence can be the result of apathy and worldliness and sin. On the other hand, it is a grievous thing to break a spiritual silence where there is the bowed heart of everyone in

the company in inaudible worship ; we want to be very careful about breaking the silence.

With regard to public ministry : In such a meeting and all church meetings, I give it as my considered judgment that the Scriptures are beyond all doubt that women must be silent, that teaching must be restricted to the men, and audible prayer in church meetings—please note, in church meetings—must be restricted to the men. That is as to procedure.

As to discipline, that is a subject all by itself, and therefore I am not going to touch upon that. I am going to finalize my remarks by asking you to think of the duration. How long are we to do this ? No one is clearer on the matter than Paul, who was anticipating that his blessed Lord might come at any time ; he was not waiting for death but for the Lord. Of course, death might come, and he wrote accordingly. The Lord might come, and he wrote accordingly. But he said that “ as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do show the Lord’s death till He come ”.

It is one of the outstanding things for which we should praise God, that from the time of its institution until now, saints all over the world, of all shades of opinion, have been and are glad to remember their Lord, and congregationally to worship Him in this simple way.

Saturday (3 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.)

DISCUSSION

MR. J. R. IRELAND (Sheffield) : Is there any guidance in the Scriptures concerning whether one brother should invariably give thanks for the bread and for the wine ; or is it quite in order for one brother to give thanks for the bread, and another brother to give thanks for the wine ?

MR. E. W. ROGERS : I know of no Scripture that would give guidance one way or the other. Oftentimes a brother may be concerned to thank the Lord for both ; on the other hand, he may in grace consider others and leave another brother to give thanks for the cup.

MR. C. PHILLIPS (Harrow) : Nothing much has been said to guide those of us who are young and who have to deal with young people on the leading of the Spirit. We are somewhat

glib in using terms like this, without trying to explain what we mean by the terms. We come to the Lord's table, and the brethren will say the Lord is present : a brother gets up and leads in a hymn and reads the Scriptures. Sometimes it is obvious it is not the leading of the Spirit. I should like instruction on what is involved in the leading of the Spirit.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : It is a remarkable thing that 1 Cor. 14, to which I have referred and which is our charter as to the procedure in such a meeting, makes no reference whatsoever about the leading of the Spirit. The fact of the matter is that if a person is characteristically and habitually led by the Spirit, he gives evidence that he is a child of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." It may therefore be expected that on Sunday morning the expression of worship, or the giving of thanks for the bread and the cup, or in ministry, will in such case be the product of the character of his consistent regular life.

On the other hand, a person who is not so led by the Spirit during the week, may take carnal advantage of the liberty on Sunday morning, give out his favourite hymn (a thing that ought to be discouraged) or read some trite passage of Scripture. Nothing will make up for spirituality, though we lay down as many principles and rules and regulations as we like. If we are not spiritual people, we shall not have spiritual meetings.

MR. P. RUOFF : Is it not more correct to think—I am enquiring—that spiritual discernment, when there has been the government of the Spirit of God in our daily lives, is the thing which will direct us at the time of worship? I do believe there is such a thing as spiritual appropriateness and discernment which leads us in worship.

MR. R. T. RICHARDSON (Chelmsford) : In connection with simplicity of the worship at our morning meeting, I feel oftentimes we are in bondage not only to a rather confined idea as to the leading of the Spirit, but also the question of a theme that must be developed. Do you not think we are in danger sometimes, and especially younger brethren, of being in bondage to the idea that a theme must be developed, and therefore withholding thanksgiving, praise and worship that the Lord is looking for?

MR. A. J. ATKINS (Chairman) : There is a danger both ways. We have all had experience of a wonderful sense of sequence produced by the Lord's leading, or the grace of the soul and spirit in our worship meetings. At other times an artificial imitation of that.

MR. F. N. MARTIN (Edgware) : There is one verse we ought to consider : it is 1 Cor. 14: 32. " And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." Scripture does not necessarily combine any service for worship with the Lord's Supper, but if you have such a service for worship joined to the Lord's supper, it becomes subject to the conditions of 1 Cor. 14. One is that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. We have got to exercise a godly commonsense, a godly sense of propriety and the spiritual fitness of things. How right Mr. Rogers was in saying, unless we are doing that all the time, and all the week, and in relation to everything in our lives, we cannot expect suddenly to receive the capacity to do it on Sunday morning.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : There is a good deal of misunderstanding in regard to the leading of the Spirit, as though you sit there passive until you have an urge to get up and say something. I do not consider that is in any way the teaching of Scripture. I believe the meeting for worship is a meeting for spiritual people who have been living their lives during the week in the Spirit, who are walking in the Spirit, who come as spiritual men prepared to worship, knowing nothing between them and the Lord, having cleansed themselves and examined themselves as the Scripture says, that they may be fit to share in that solemn blessed gathering.

Insofar as men are in that condition, they are in a position to enter into the spirit and leading of that meeting, and will know quite clearly what the theme is, what the leading of the Holy Spirit of all our minds is, as we sit there, or join in singing, praying, or being quiet, in sobriety and, as we have just been hearing, under our own sober self-control. We are thinking, and the leading of the Spirit comes to us not in some urge or prompting specially, but in the fitness of the thing that is passing through our mind as a contribution to the worship.

If I may make a personal allusion, I have for many years

adopted that practice. I have sat quietly through the meeting ; I have followed everything that has been said and done. I have tried to enter into everything, and almost invariably at the conclusion of the meeting, if there is opportunity given for ministering brothers to minister, I have had something clearly on my mind in keeping with the theme and thought of the meeting which it would be to profit to say ; and more often than not, that which has come to me has been as fresh to me as it may have been to those who listened.

Now I believe that that is the method that should be adopted by everyone who desires to take any part in the worship service.

MR. P. P. CHAMMINGS (Birmingham) : On the question of prayer, I would like to have the expressions of brothers on the direction of prayer in worship. The Scripture enjoins us that we do this in remembrance of our Lord Jesus and in direction to the Father.

MR. G. K. LOWTHER (Grimsby) : The difficulty of restricting worship to the Father is an outcrop of the Needed Truth Movement. They tell us we must not pray to the Lord Jesus. Yet we remember Stephen prayed, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and Paul's, " I besought the Lord (Jesus) ". It seems to me it is the opposite of simplicity to lay down direction as to whether praise or prayer should be directed to the Father or the Son. Here we must be subjected to the leading and fitness of the circumstances.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : The notion that we must always and only address the Father, to the exclusion of the Lord Jesus, is based upon John 4. " But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." We must remember at this point the full disclosure of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity had not been made, that Israel understood that the Lord our God is One Lord. They only knew one God. They did not know anything about Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nor indeed did this woman. And when the Lord Jesus spoke about the Father, she only visualized the great God in the heavens. Consequently verse 24 : " God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Therefore the contention that

we must only direct our prayer and thanksgiving to the Father is, I think, based upon a misunderstanding of that passage.

MR. G. H. WILSON (Sheffield) : Will Mr. Rogers please explain John 16: 23, " And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it unto you " ?

MR. E. W. ROGERS : There is another passage : John 14: 14, " If ye shall ask (Me) anything in My Name, I will do it." John 16 teaches direct access to the First Person of the Holy Trinity. John 14 does not preclude our addressing the Lord Jesus.

MR. J. R. IRELAND (Sheffield) : There is a further aspect of this question of addressing prayers. Nothing has been said yet about addressing firstly prayers, and secondly, hymns to the Holy Spirit.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL (Leven) : From a purely logical point of view it would be right to address the Holy Spirit because we believe the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, but logic is not always the best guide. The Holy Spirit indwells us ; the Father and the Son are in heaven, objects of thanksgiving. Intuition indicates that we should address the Father and the Son, but our spiritual intuition would tell us the Spirit is indwelling us, and He inspires our worship.

The " acknowledged ministers " on the agenda has not been discussed. The ministry in the morning ; whose hands has it to be in ?

MR. E. W. ROGERS : As regards what Mr. Campbell has happily mentioned, I have said 1 Cor. 14 gives to us guiding principles for an open meeting. That is to say, in our practice for the Sunday morning meeting. It is not a chapter that relates to anything wider than a local church. Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the epistle to the Corinthians stand together and should always be read as part and parcel of one piece. One thing is perfectly clear from chapter 14 and that is, in the expression of praise, worship and thanksgiving, it should be left open for all men to take appropriate part—not careless part but appropriate part—but in the matter of ministry, you must bear in mind there is a question raised at the end of chapter 12 which is an integral part of this section, which reads thus :

v. 29, " Are all apostles ? are all prophets ? are all teachers ? "

Now apostles and prophets, in my judgment, have passed away ; we no longer have either of those gifts. But are all teachers ? Now I am fully persuaded that in our morning meeting, teaching of the saints should be restricted to the recognized teachers of the church. At Antioch (Acts 13) the names are given of the prophets and teachers. They were known in the church. I am convinced that in local assemblies the church should know, as we have already indicated, its overseers, its deacons and its teachers. We would never endorse secular teaching of secular matters by those not qualified ; how dangerous to entrust teaching of the saints to those who do not know the mind of God. In consequence, this item of acknowledged preachers is in my mind most important, that the teaching of the saints should be restricted to those who have been spiritually acknowledged and are obviously qualified.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL : An " any man ministry " is a great weakness of our assemblies. Those in the places of responsibility in the assembly should discountenance it at every turn, if only because many of our young men are sickened by unprofitable ministry.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : When I gave an address on 1 Cor. 12 : I mentioned that v. 11 of that chapter precludes a " one man ministry ", seeing that the Spirit is divided to every man severally as He will, but that v. 29 forbids an " any man " talker. There is no sanction in Scripture for a " one man ministry " in a local assembly, but equally no approval for an " any man ministry ".

MR. A. J. ASHWELL (Reading) : I think the questions we have been considering this afternoon put a great responsibility on us all. Do you not think that the morning meeting should come out of great exercise of heart during the week, of the Lord's people ? None of us would think of addressing a gospel meeting or teaching an assembly without preparation and much exercise of heart as to the right thoughts the Lord would have us pass over. We should seek to sustain the assembly of God, and should be in deep exercise not merely on Saturday night but all through the week as to ministry that will be suitable to the Lord's people. This may also not refer

merely to ministry after the breaking of bread, but ministry which should help in worship.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : Two things I want to say : first of all, I have been struck in my various travels with the almost invariable practice of deferring the breaking of bread till ten minutes to twelve. This is regrettable. We should come together to break bread and we should be in a readiness for the purpose of doing it. The second thing I wanted to say was this, with regard to teaching the saints, we ought—and I know this has been mentioned at this conference before—to give more serious attention to it and do something about it. On Sunday morning we get the largest number of the church together ; more often than not they go away without any food at all. I know the old tag, “ We come to give and not to get,” but I cannot shut my eyes to this, that the duty of elders is to feed the flock, and not to send them away starved. I am a strong advocate for two meetings on Sunday, a “ breaking of bread ”, and a teaching meeting. Some of our younger believers cannot possibly get out during the week. Many wives cannot get out, sometimes fathers are detained during the week. We get the most out on Sunday morning ; we send them away starved. We ought not to do it.

MR. A. J. ATKINS : We all have our times of prayer, but I feel very challenged as to whether, in these very busy times, when we all feel the stress and strain, one does know much about that waiting upon the Lord and that sense of adoration, that preoccupation with Christ which I am sure you all agree is the very essence of worship.

Saturday (6 p.m.)

Chairman : MR. F. N. MARTIN (Edgware)

SIMPLICITY OF PURPOSE

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN

"One thing have I desired" (Psalm 27: 4)

I THINK there is no question but that God has very graciously been leading us in our thinking and talking together : not only in the messages given, but also in the debates. I am sure that God has been restraining and constraining. He has been giving us unity of mind, which has been very precious, and which, if I may say so, is a little surprising, considering that we have been drawn from all manner of places. We have come here as individuals, each with his own affiliation : many of us unknown to one another. Our views, our traditions, our upbringing have coloured our thinking. And yet—wonder of wonders—God has made us of one mind in the Lord. There has not been a harsh word spoken—and, after all, we are only men : we are men also of strong convictions : and you know, sometimes men with strong convictions are a little bit intolerant towards anyone who happens to have another conviction. We have had some examples of that : and it is something which we must bear patiently, and without the slightest element of resentment. Yes, we know what we are ourselves : we know what frail men the best of us are : we know also how many mistakes we ourselves have made in the past : and we have had to revise our thinking. I am saying all this specially for the benefit of the younger men here, who have reached a stage in life when a man, is prone to think he knows everything ! I remember my dear old friend of years ago, Sir James Bird—some of you may remember him : a man of eminence and ability, and yet a humble man : and very much associated with our assembly life. I remember as a young man asking him a question, and he said : " You know, Monty, if you had asked me that twenty years ago I could have told you ! " And I learned my lesson.

Now I have to talk to you this afternoon of an aspect of this simplicity, which is to be our continuing theme throughout this conference : and this time it is to be "Simplicity of Purpose."

I have divided the subject and the basic Scripture into three sections.

1. "*One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after : that I may dwell in the house of the Lord.*" That is, that the assembly should become the home for the household of the Lord.

2. "*To behold the beauty of the Lord.*" That is, that the assembly should be a place of spiritual apprehension of Christ.

3. "*To enquire in his temple.*" That is, that the assembly should be the place of instruction in the deep things of God.

Let me repeat some things that I said to you on Friday evening. A christian is portrayed in Scripture as a very simple man. There is nothing abstruse in his outlook on life. His ambitions have become weaned from the restless strivings of the natural man, whose eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor his ear satisfied with hearing, whose mind is occupied, as were the Athenians, with nothing save to tell or to hear some new thing. His has become a single objective which he finds all-absorbing. He has one desire which he determines to seek after. He seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Everything else becomes incidental, and he leaves them to be added unto him in accordance with the promise. Like Carey, his business in life is to preach the gospel, and he mends shoes to pay expenses. He has become a man of one thing. This colours and directs the course of his personal life. He refuses to be entangled with the ambitions and designs that hold the attention of men generally. He becomes indifferent to fame and to the praise of men. He hears and obeys the injunction : "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Such, then, is the christian man as depicted in the Word of God : and the more our individual lives approximate to this pattern, the more happy and blessed we shall be, and certainly the more pleasing to our Lord.

Of course the same principle applies, and should rule the believer in his relations with his fellow creatures. That is a very important matter. He does not seek to exclude them in

hope of simplifying life as a hermit or a recluse, since he knows that this would result in a life both unnatural and selfish. He sees that he is called to a life of separation, not isolation. He recognizes that our Lord was separate from sinners, and that He was at the same time, a friend of sinners, and sat at meat with them. On the other hand, he does not cultivate their companionship because he instinctively recognizes that they are not of his company. As a certain friend of mine was told by his business associates: "You live in a different world from us." Which, of course, was quite true. Of Peter and John it was recorded: "And being let go, they went unto their own company." And every true believer will do the same. "Birds of a feather flock together" is true in every walk of life. Sheep are essentially gregarious, and this is eminently true of the flock of Christ. I remember one of my boys years ago said to me: "Mr. Goodman, now that I am converted, ought I to give up my old friends?" I said to him: "I do not think I should bother about that. You tell them that you are converted, and they will see to that." He came to me a few days afterwards, and said with a grin: "You were quite right. They have!" One of the surest evidences of the genuineness of a christian's profession is that he gravitates to the company of christians. "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." "I don't like christians," remarked a young man to me—he was one of my senior class members. He began, of course, in a very polite way by saying: "Mr. Goodman, I don't want to be rude." Then, of course, I knew he was going to be! And then he remarked: "I don't like christians." I could not help laughing. And I replied: "Of course, you don't. You're not one. If you were you would love them." And so a christian man seeks christian company, and it is that that creates a christian community. And such was the nature of the christian Church from the beginning. This is how they are described: "And all that believed were together." What brought them together? A common faith brought them together: and a community was formed by people of a common faith. And a common accord bound them together. For they were all with one accord in one place—accord, not

discord. And a common gladness and singleness of heart distinguished them. Could anything be more simple? And that was all their ambition. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." They were not out to build a church. It just existed. Very much as Peter had wanted to dwell on the Mount of Transfiguration with tents for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, so now their one desire was that this blessed new fellowship might continue unbroken: and that was all. They had no further vision. "That they might dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Oh, how blessed to have found a dwelling-place! Oh, happy man! The restless world around may wander to and fro seeking rest, and finding none; he has found a home. One of the most blessed things in christian experience is that you have found a home.

Such, then, was the primitive conception of a christian assembly, and such should be its basic character to-day. It is the home of the household: and a home is the simplest form of community known to men. A home has no form of constitution: it has no tabulated rules or regulations. It would be a strange home if there were rules stuck up directing everything that every member of the family was expected to do. I should like to go away from such a home. There are no regulations to govern its conduct. Each member of the household takes his or her place in the home naturally. The father as head, and the mother as his helpmeet, assuming her woman's ministry in the home, not seeking to usurp his, though assuming it quite naturally in his absence—or inability. And the children of the family living in happy harmony as brothers and sisters under the guidance and care of the parents, and obeying them. Such is a home, or should be. And so it is with the Church of God as represented by the local assembly. It is a simple community of simple people, none of them trying to be clever, none of them trying to exalt themselves over the others: all taking their place quite happily and in harmony with one another, and looking upon one another as their natural and normal associates in the home. You do not find children questioning why their brother is in the home, or their sister: or whether they are worthy to stay in the home. They just take each other for granted, especially if it happens to be that blessed thing, a large family, which you do not see nowadays. The family in which

I was brought up in just a normal Victorian family. I was number twelve—and there were two more after me : and we just lived together, and we took each other for granted : there was a family loyalty and a family love displayed all the time. Of course, there were frictions, but they were of a very friendly character, and we grew up all the better for having them, and for having had the corners knocked off, rather severely, from time to time. But there was home. But there is a picture of the house of the Lord, and you are a member of the house of the Lord : you have to look upon others as members of the family. You say : “ I owe them a special loyalty, a special duty. They are in the family : we are related to each other : we are in close harmony.” Sometimes you may find that the Lord has some curious children in His family, and they want some putting up with. I remember C. F. Hogg saying : “ You must learn to put up with your brethren because, remember, that they have got to put up with you.”

This simplicity must be watched and guarded against the enemy who would corrupt it from the simplicity that is in Christ. Otherwise we shall find, as in many a domestic circle, disruption resulting in a broken home. There are broken homes, alas, to be found amongst assemblies as well as amongst families : and the cause is much the same. There is ever a subtle danger that the simple character of our assembly life may become corrupted, if only from the fact that it is inherent in man to seek to organize and regulate every project he undertakes. A church, however, is not an organization any more than a family is. It is a spiritual organism, and can only be maintained by the spiritual life of spiritual members. When the spiritual yields place to the carnal, then simplicity gives place to complexity, and that which should have been a christian home becomes a religious institution, with rules and conditions which form the ground of reception rather than simple family relationship. Thus the assembly ceases to be regarded as the house of the Lord to all, the household of faith, but only to the conforming minority. Here is the disaster to the Church of God. Its unity has been destroyed, not by its enemies, but by its most zealous champions, who have corrupted it from the simplicity that is in Christ. If that simplicity is to be recovered it can only be by steadfastly resisting any teaching that would result in the exclusion of any true

member of the household, except on the ground of conduct unworthy of the family, and dishonouring to its Head. And so we have a home where we cultivate all the household of faith, and learn the lessons of family relationship and family fellowship, forbearing one another in love, and caring mutually for the spiritual welfare of all in the family. That is something to be desired of the Lord, and to be sought after. "One thing have I desired of the Lord . . . that I may dwell in the house of the Lord," that I may dwell there happily, without friction, for ever. To know that blessed fellowship with the saints—that is one thing to be desired of the Lord.

But there is more than this. For it is in the circle of the assembly that we seek to "behold the beauty of the Lord". It is here that we should find the place of spiritual apprehension of Christ, for it is in the midst of the church that our Lord reveals Himself as nowhere else. You cannot live a deeply spiritual life, of growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, as a free lance christian. Our Lord never contemplated this. He puts us in the family in order that we may learn there what we could learn nowhere else. How lovely is Christ! How lovely is He to the believer as He makes Himself known in "the breaking of bread". How often have we sung that lovely hymn :

" Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face,
 Here faith can touch and handle things unseen,
 Here would I grasp with firmer hand Thy grace,
 And all my weariness upon Thee lean."

For there are ever fresh beauties to be seen and learned in our beloved Lord. Paul's great ambition was that he might know Christ, though he had known Him for a generation. And it is this that prevents "the feast" from descending into an oft-repeated ritual, which is the peril which besets it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and this can only be learned in the secret place of the Most High. It is here when "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" that the Lord hearkens and hears, and draws near as He did to those who were talking of Him on the way to Emmaus. He always draws near to such. Let your heart be moved as you talk about Him, and I will promise you one thing, He will draw very near. It is to such that He reveals

Himself, and the things concerning Himself. Taking the Scriptures, and beginning at Moses and the prophets, He will expound unto you the things concerning Himself. As you walk and talk together He will draw near. It is then that we experience that heartburn that the two on the road to Emmaus confessed. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way?" How the Lord enjoyed that walk to Emmaus! And how He enjoys the company of His people whenever they meet in His name. Have you ever thought of that? Have you thought of the pleasure it gives to the Lord to meet with us at the breaking of bread? Should we not anticipate it with the greatest delight? We are to sit round His table to-morrow; we shall enjoy Him, and He will enjoy us. There we behold "the beauty of the Lord". Here, above all, with open face we behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image. How simple! How full of mystery! How profound!

" If now with eyes defiled and dim
 We see the signs but see not Him,
 Oh, may His love the scales displace,
 And bid us see Him face to face."

Here, then, is the simplicity of purpose with which believers gather round their Lord. It is that He may be made known to us in "the breaking of bread". There is a mystery here, which is unfathomable, and if we miss the mystery of the Lord's table we have failed in our christian worship: we have not beheld the beauty of the Lord, and we have not seen the glory of the Lord. For like the high priest of old, so our Lord's robes are robes of glory and beauty. We behold His beauty and His glory, and we are taken up with Him: our hearts burn within us by the way. Thus the church is the house of the Lord, a place of spiritual vision, where each believer meets God, and where he beholds the beauty of the Lord. That was the discovery that Jacob made that night when he fell asleep at Luz, and woke to find it Bethel. "How dreadful is this place," he said. "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Jacob stumbled upon the house of God where no house was. And we, too, may find ourselves in the house of God. It is that which constitutes the humblest gospel hall, the house of God. It is there where

vital contact with God is made. We have been meeting God here. God's glory is revealed where believers become God-conscious. I wonder how many of us have become God-conscious? When you gather as a Scriptural assembly for worship, do you become God-conscious? Do you say: "How awesome is this place! How awesome has it become, this humble little mission hall! I have become God-conscious here. I have met God here"? Will unbelievers report that God is in you of a truth? Not only is it the house of God, it is also the gate of heaven. There is a ladder there with its top reaching up to heaven. Woe betide that assembly where the top does not reach to heaven. When we gather for worship can we say: "Behold, I see the heavens open, and the Son of man at the right hand of God"?

There are the three purposes for which the local assembly exists. 1. It is a place of family fellowship; 2. It is a place of spiritual vision; and 3. It is a place of searching out the deep things of God. Of "enquiring in His temple" or considering His temple. For the church is nothing less than the temple of God, a habitation of God, wherever a company of believing saints meet together. And the church is the special sphere of the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. Every member of the assembly should come quite consciously under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He should be led by Him into an ever-increasing understanding of the deep things of God. For Jesus said that it is the province of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and to reveal them unto us. And you will never know them in any other way. You will not learn them from books of theology, or even from a study of the bible. There is nothing mechanical about the bible. You cannot learn things out of the bible as you learn things out of a book on chemistry. You learn nothing out of the bible except it pleases the Spirit of God to take of the things of God and reveal them unto you. And as you learn of Him your own spiritual life and character deepens and ripens and becomes enriched. That is the purpose of the Church of God. It should be a place where every member is taught in the deep things of God. It should be a matter of personal heart searching on the part of one and all in the assembly that this should be so. There should be a manifest growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, not only on the part of the

young and immature, but on the part of those of riper years, including the elders of the assembly. If Paul could say : " Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect," so surely can the ripest saint amongst us. The ministry of the Spirit in the church, both directly, and through His appointed pastors and teachers, is expressly for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ. I said on Friday evening that the building of the local church is not an expression found in Scripture : and lest I should be misunderstood, let me say that the emphasis in Scripture is not the establishment of a local church in its numerical growth. A local assembly grows just in so far as its individual members are built up in their most holy faith. All ministry in the church should have this end in view. It should be addressed, not only, or mainly, to the intellect, not only or mainly to the head, but to the heart. The head must *learn*, but the heart must *burn*, or the ministry is of little worth. When you minister, do you move people's hearts, or do you merely instruct their heads? And so the assembly is a simple community of simple people, imbued with one purpose which they desire and seek after. That they may form one household of the Lord, that they may dwell there together in unity and holy fellowship. That it may become ever the place where they increasingly behold the beauty of the Lord, and with unveiled face gaze upon His glory; and that it should be the place where they one and all " follow after holiness ", and growth in grace as their one pursuit, " until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ".

Saturday (8 p.m.)

DISCUSSION

MR. F. N. MARTIN (Chairman) : We cannot too often renew our personal contact with our Lord. I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Goodman's address was of such a nature as not to admit of discussion : I do not think we shall feel that we have really anything to discuss. But if any brother thinks

he has some contribution to make, which would be useful and profitable along these lines, we should like to hear what he has to say.

May I just remind you of the content of Mr. Goodman's message. He spoke of the joy and privilege of being in God's family ; he spoke also of its relationships. He spoke also of our being in " the house of the Lord " and of seeing " the beauty of the Lord ". He spoke of " enquiring in the temple of the Lord ", and of the church being a " habitation of God by the Spirit ", and of being indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

Those are very deep and wonderful things. Unfortunately, we are not very well trained in collective meditation. I sometimes wish we were like the Quakers and that we could just sit silently pondering these things. But we are really not very good at that, and I do not propose that we try to do it now. But may we, please, have some spiritual contributions along the lines of Mr. Goodman's address to us. If there is any particular point on which you would like some elucidation I am sure Mr. Goodman will be pleased to give it to you. As I have already said, I feel that it was so complete a message that there can be really nothing that can be added to it.

MR. A. E. J. BURNHAM (Alton) : I felt that Mr. Goodman's summing up of the " family " connection in regard to the assembly was one of the key matters for us all to take back home to the local assemblies.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : We read in Malachi 1. 6 : " A son honoureth his father. . . . If, then, I be a father, where is mine honour ? " Let us be meditative for a little while. This is a sacred subject and we want to ponder it. If there are any thoughts in your mind directly connected with the subject, now is the time to share it with us.

DR. A. HANTON (Cambridge) : With regard to the third division of Mr. Goodman's message, that of " enquiring in His temple ". I wonder whether, perhaps, there is a tendency in our assemblies to give too little room for the reading of the Word of God. I am more and more impressed with the fact that, helpful though many addresses are, they are generally hung upon one text, one short verse from a portion of the Word ; and that is all.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : Is it not a fact that when Paul bade Timothy to " give attendance to reading " it had reference to " *public* reading " ? Is that so ?

MR. J. MCPHERSON (Glasgow) : In the early years of the Church it was the duty of the leader to read publicly the Scriptures. It was one of the minor offices of the Church.

MR. D. J. WISEMAN (Finchley) : To read publicly is to proclaim. The thought struck me as Mr. Goodman was speaking that the word " simplicity " in the New Testament is also interpreted as " singleness ". " He that exhorteth, on exhortation : he that giveth let him do it with simplicity " (Romans 12: 8). " Simplicity of Purpose " might also be " Singleness of Purpose ".

MR. F. N. MARTIN : Would anyone like to say something about the public reading of the Scriptures in our assemblies ? This is an important point.

MR. K. G. HYLAND (Poole) : The question of the conduct of the evening service has been much before us in Poole. Recently we considered the conduct of the evening service, having regard to the fact that there would be unconverted persons present. There are people attending who have no contact with the Christian Church, and I think we ought to think very seriously as to how the evening service should be presented to them. What we have tried to do is this : We have in our evening service an element of public worship, and public reading of the Scriptures ; a suitable Psalm, for instance, would be read, followed by prayer ; and then the second reading would be relevant to the message of the speaker. I do feel that we should seriously consider those whom we are longing to reach, many of whom are present at our Sunday evening meeting.

MR. R. GUYATT (Carshalton) : I was at a hall not far from London, and the same question was raised. They told me that for some time they felt the Scripture reading had not been given the reverence which they felt was due to it. And so instead of having it read from the ordinary platform, they had a reading desk (a lectern) with a large bible on it : and there had been a more reverent reading of the Scriptures,

especially of those appropriate passages chosen by the preacher : and the effect on the congregation had been quite remarkable. It was not something introduced into the service, but rather a due prominence given to the reading of the Scripture.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : Is it not a fact that there are few of us who are really any good at reading Scripture ? We had some voice production classes at our assembly, and it was fun. A lady teacher came to us ; there were young people, and there were older brethren too, and we had to do the most extraordinary exercises. We were taught not to drop our voice at a comma ; and she really gave us some very useful information, and which I think we profited by, to some extent. The fact of the matter is that the standard of public reading of the Scripture is deplorably low.

MR. W. THREADGOLD (Purley) : We read that the Lord Jesus, when He was in the synagogue on one occasion, " stood up for to read," and that when He sat down " all eyes were fastened on Him " ! Do we read the Scriptures as He must have done ?

MR. P. O. RUOFF : Some years ago Bishop Taylor Smith occupied the pulpit of a prominent church in the City of London, with the one and only object of reading the Scripture. Those who gathered there were deeply impressed by that reading of the Scripture without comment. The Bishop, of course, had a very beautiful voice ; and it was very effective thus to listen to the Scriptures being well read. I wish, above all things, that we might acquire that gift of public reading of the Word of God, so as to convey to our listeners its real meaning.

MR. S. D. BOWLER (Southampton) : We do feel that the reading of Scripture should be given its proper and due place. I find it very helpful to read from one of the more current versions, and I would like to commend that. I am running a little Bible class, and before we sing, or do anything else, I always read a portion of the Word of God in one of the modern versions at least once, and in the Authorized Version afterwards. I think it is very helpful to read the epistle to the Romans in Phillip's translation.

MR. F. R. COAD (Sutton) : The habit of those present looking up the passage in the Scriptures is not helpful to those who are taking part in public reading, and may well contribute very largely to the failure on the part of many brethren to read the passages properly.

DR. C. C. HARVEY (Doncaster) : I would refer to the point concerning the various versions of the Scripture. We recognize the beauty and historic importance of the Authorized Version. The sword of the Spirit is as sharp and keen as the original Greek of the New Testament was in the first century, or as Tyndale's great translation was when it first came out four hundred years ago. But we are up against this dilemma, that the pagan public are not familiar with our Authorized Version. There are present-day versions of the Scriptures which we might well use.

MR. L. E. PERKINS (Croydon) : Mr. Ruoff, in speaking of the beautiful reading of the Scripture by Bishop Taylor Smith, remarked that the reading was without comment. May I suggest to our preaching brethren that that would be a very wise and excellent example to follow. So often in one's own experience the reading of Holy Scripture in our evening services is largely ruined by the fact that the preacher insists upon inserting a great deal of his own commentary between the verses of the Scripture. The preacher has at his disposal thirty minutes in which he may expound the Scriptures for the profit of his audience. One does suggest that he would be very wise, and it would be to the honour of God, if the Scriptures were read to us and that they were allowed to occupy their own proper place in the service.

MR. H. E. POPE (Lewes) : We appreciate, of course, the beauty of the Authorized Version, but people do not always understand the sense of what is being read. " He was cut off out of the land of the living " is beautiful English, but there are parts of the Scripture which are obscure : and I feel that help is given by expounding a passage as it is being read. We cannot expect a twentieth century listener to understand many of the passages merely as a result of the clarity of our voices.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : The Bible is exceedingly difficult for

the pagan public to understand in whatever version you use when expounding it. We should have faith to believe that the Spirit of God will use the reading of the Word, whether or not it is understood at the time by those who hear it.

MR. H. E. POPE : It is truly astonishing that boys, intelligent boys of seventeen and eighteen, cannot grasp the meaning of quite simple passages. I wonder whether that is true of some who come to our evening meetings.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : It can be seen in Acts 2, v. 14 down to v. 21, Peter quoted Scripture, and then from v. 25 down to v. 28 he made comments thereon. And again from v. 34 he quoted Scripture and he made comments thereon. That seemed to be the practice of Peter. And the reading of the Scripture, plus the spiritual comment, will do its own work.

MR. R. GUYATT : Is it not true to say that those folk to whom Peter was speaking were well acquainted with the Scriptures? I doubt whether the reading of Scripture to a present-day pagan audience would have that same effect. But what they do not understand can be explained to them, and the force of the Scripture which is our authority can then be applied.

MR. E. W. ROGERS : In the book of the Acts, there are records of four addresses : one on the Day of Pentecost ; one in the house of Cornelius, to a Gentile audience ; one at Antioch, to a Jewish audience ; and one recorded in chapter 17, which was again to a Gentile audience. On the Day of Pentecost and at Antioch, I believe the Scripture was quoted, and comments given. In the other two cases, which were totally pagan audiences, no Scripture was quoted, or read.

MR. D. J. WISEMAN : In the case of our Lord reading the Scripture in the synagogue (Luke 4), we read that " when He had opened the book (or the scroll) He found the place where it was written . . . And when He had read the passage from Isaiah, He sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." The attention of the people was attracted to Him because He was going to teach. " And He began to say unto them. . . ." I think it is generally agreed that that was the Jewish practice ; that is

what Ezra did. Ezra is known to the Jews to-day as Interpreter, and it is still the Jewish practice to read and then to interpret. The whole of the literature of the Talmud is built upon this.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : The question is, Are we going to have expository reading? If so, then we should say to our audience, "It may be that you are not very familiar with this portion of God's Word. Let me just tell you before we read, a little of the background, and what the passage is going to be about, so that you can follow it a little more easily." Just giving them the gist of it. It is not intended to be a word-by-word, or a verse-by-verse exposition of Scripture. I think our discussion so far has been very helpful and profitable.

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY (Purley) : If I may refer back to the pulpit Bible. If we are going to have a pulpit Bible at all, I would suggest that a new one be purchased, something that is attractive to look at, and in a modern print that is easy to read. I have sometimes had to use an old family Bible, possibly some two hundred years old, where the old-fashioned form of the letter "s" is used. There seems no reason why there should not sometimes be a brief explanation beforehand of the passage that is to be read.

MR. J. MCCARTHY (Bromley) : I would like to point out that the Scriptures are now being taught in the schools. There are many christian teachers in our schools who are teaching the Scriptures faithfully. It means that our boys and girls are growing up with a certain amount of knowledge of the Bible. Some of the older boys show a remarkable understanding of the Word of God. My own headmaster encourages the use of the bible also in the English lesson. So that there are splendid opportunities amongst the youngsters to-day, some of whom form your audience at the gospel meeting on Sunday evenings.

MR. A. G. NUTE (Bristol) : We have had considerable discussion about the reading of the Scriptures : may we have some discussion about prayer in our Sunday evening service. It is helpful for the congregation to have fellowship in prayer. There is no reason why we should not make fuller preparations in regard to prayer before we come to the service, and we can

tell the folk beforehand that we intend praying for certain things.

MR. SPENCER THOMAS : I am of the opinion that our public pulpit prayers should have far more preparation than our public pulpit addresses, because in our prayers we are addressing God, and we should come to Him with acceptable words.

MR. W. G. NORRIS (Leigh-on-Sea) : I feel the question of prayers at the gospel meeting is most important. It is part of our preaching to our congregations, as well as our addressing God : and we must carry them with us, even though they may be an unconverted audience. By that I mean that our prayers may involve national matters, and these are matters that even an unconverted audience can enter into. With regard to our prayers and with regard to the people who are there, I think we sometimes tend to use that language and tone which I do not think are conducive to blessing. Let us pray as we would if we were actually kneeling beside them. I think it is helpful to break up our prayers, perhaps into two or three parts, to enable the people to follow the prayer intelligently.

MR. A. J. ATKINS : The theme of this conference is "Simplicity". I have felt for a long time that we do need to be more truly childlike in our public prayer. We have been speaking of the gospel meeting, but it applies also to worship. We have all at times suffered from "theological praying", even if we have not ourselves indulged in it. Let us recall our thoughts to the main point of Mr. Goodman's address, that is, that the assembly should be the house of God, where there is a ladder to heaven. That applies, may I submit, primarily to our worship gatherings. We all ought to cultivate a holy sensitiveness of heart and conscience both in the gathering, and when we reflect upon it afterwards, as to whether really we have been conscious of being in God's presence. And those of us, as brethren, who have the privilege of leading in prayer, or thanksgiving, should be very sensitive to the fact that we are really talking to God, and not just having a sub-conscious idea that others are listening to us. This should also apply to our gospel meetings. As we come into what should be to us the sanctuary of God, we should be

conscious of the fact that " God is here ". That is something that ought to happen ; and if that were so I do not think these smaller matters which concern us would be of such consequence, because the Spirit of God, and His presence among us, would be so evident.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN: I think it has been obvious to most of us for some time past that the spiritual instruction imparted by our assemblies has not been of a very high order or standard. I do not mean by that that our visiting speakers do not bring to us uplifting and heartening words, and a good many have been blessed as a result of their visit. But there is an absence of that which is consecutive in the way of teaching. There is very much to be taught and learnt. There is such a thing as getting stereotyped in your teaching and in your own personal understanding of Scripture. We have had it harped upon two or three times at this conference about the constant quoting of familiar passages of Scripture. It really sometimes is deplorable, the extent to which that has been done. There is a great mine of wealth in Scripture that we do not touch at all. That, of course, is very largely due to the teachers, whom God has given to the individual assemblies, and whose duty it is to equip themselves to be the teachers in the assemblies. The address may be carefully planned out ; but when you come to consider it dispassionately, you find that you have covered very little ground, that very little consecutive instruction has been given. I am not only thinking about mere head instruction, but rather of bringing the Word with force and power, illuminating the truth and making it live. It seems to me that the great basic fundamental truths of Scripture should be diligently taught in the assemblies, so that young people especially may be really established and grounded in the Word of God, and that the older people may be given what is sometimes called a " refresher course ", which they very badly need (and the ministering brethren badly need also !). It seems to me that some sort of concerted action should be taken by those concerned : that the elders in the assemblies should come together and say, " What can we do ? " Very often in the assemblies the interest varies according to who the visiting speaker happens to be. One who happens to be well known will attract a

goodly company, while another who may be equally able, but not so well known, will attract very few : and you will find the attendance at your meetings will fluctuate deplorably accordingly. The assemblies ought not to be relying so much upon the visiting speakers. I am very clear and certain about that, but I am also very certain that a great many assemblies cannot supply the lack, simply because those who should be teachers, and should be doing the work, have really not taken the trouble to equip themselves. I think that is a very important matter. You see, the assembly ought to be the place where those who are hungry, those who desire "the sincere milk of the Word", those who come to be fed, find the food that they need, and it is the responsibility of the elders to supply that food. This should be a matter of urgent prayer. Ask the Lord to send a speaker into your midst. "Covet earnestly the best gifts."

MR. J. WARD (Wimbledon) : I know of one visiting speaker who had been invited to our assembly, and whose message was most fruitful, but he refused another invitation to come and address us because he felt he had to be at his own assembly, and God is abundantly blessing that assembly. I am sure there is a growing hunger among our young people. There is need for a reliable, consistent ministry.

DR. C. SIMS (Exeter) : We choose a series on certain subjects from time to time, even for our young people's meeting. The meetings are held midweek and they are nearly always full. We take a series of subjects : fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer. They are taken by the brethren, and we find that the people are interested, and outsiders come too. We feel that it is most worth while to take the trouble to arrange these series of addresses, and that we should not leave it to the visiting speakers, or to our own brethren, what they should speak on, but that we should suggest a subject.

MR. A. E. GREEN (Birmingham) : We have been having a series of addresses at our midweek meeting. We are going to start another one on Church history, as recorded in the Book of the Acts. The brother does not take up the whole time ; he speaks for about half the time, and then we have discussion, when any point that has been made in the address

can be dealt with by the speaker. Not only are the saints given clear teaching, but it also helps the brother to develop his own experience and gifts. We use our own local brethren to give these addresses.

Sunday (2.15 p.m.)

Chairman : MR. A. J. ASHWELL (Reading)

SIMPLICITY OF TESTIMONY

" One Thing I Know " (John 9: 25)

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL

LET us read in 1 Cor. 2: 1 :

" And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Our subject this afternoon is Simplicity of Testimony. Our assemblies, in common with the whole christian Church, have three main functions to fulfil : (1) to worship God ; (2) to edify themselves ; (3) to testify to the world.

It is with the last of these that we are concerned this afternoon. There are, to my mind, two extremes to be avoided as we think of our witness to the world : first, that of complacency. Complacency has been described as God's greatest enemy. Would it be true to say that many of our assemblies have become completely complacent with regard to the ineffectiveness of their witness ? Every serious observer knows the answer to that question. We are content that the gospel is preached, and rightly feel that God is thereby glorified, but we are all too often without real concern that the preaching is not accomplishing its prime purpose in bringing men and women in repentance and faith to the Saviour. When the disciples saw their helplessness to cast out the demon they were sufficiently perplexed to go to the Lord with this question : " Why could we not cast it out ? " Their ineffectiveness was tragic, but had they been unconcerned it would have

been very much worse. That is where many of our assemblies are, and we must all stand in measure identified with the situation. Week after week passes without result, and very often without even a question about our impotence. If we could be aroused to the seriousness of our complacency, one feels this would be a step in the right direction.

The second extreme we must avoid is that of defeatism. We should not convey the impression by word or act that nowhere in our assemblies is anything worth while being done in the cause of evangelism. It is sometimes suggested that in this matter we stand in marked contrast to the evangelical churches around. Such generalizations, in my judgment, are unwarranted. One does know of assemblies where there is a regular work of grace going on in Sunday school, bible class, gospel meeting, and in less orthodox ways. It has to be admitted that these assemblies form a small minority. It is encouraging, however, to see the large numbers of young men and women attending our conferences : this is certainly true in Scotland, and this should be sufficient to keep us from pessimism and despair.

We have already been examining in this conference a number of the features that mark the New Testament churches. Surely it would be true to say that the conversion of men and women to Christ was a regular feature of New Testament christianity. Throughout the book of the Acts the power of the Spirit of God is in evidence in the work of conviction and conversion. Have we any right to profess that we are in the true succession of these New Testament churches unless we, too, are experiencing as a regular feature of our work the saving power of God? We dare not speak of our position if we have lost the power. This would be all too reminiscent of the decadent nation of Israel : " The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord " was their constant plea : to which the Lord of Hosts replied : " Amend your ways and your doings." The fact that they were positionally correct was a tremendous satisfaction to Israel ; it was no satisfaction to Israel's God. The process of spiritual multiplication was a feature of the early churches. If it is no longer so in our assemblies, we must face the situation with spiritual realism. One must emphasize that it is the situation in our assemblies that we are considering. No doubt there are other churches where the

circumstances in this respect are not dissimilar, or may be even worse, but God has given us a responsibility, and I trust some measure of spiritual influence, to help remedy the situation in our own local churches. It is to this task that we must address ourselves.

Why are we not concerned as we should be about the comparative ineffectiveness of our gospel witness? Doubtless there are many reasons, but I want to mention two which appear to me to be very obvious. The first is the lack of perspective. Relatively small matters of church order and of doctrine have been allowed to dominate too many minds, to the virtual neglect of our obligations to men and women around. Hours and hours are spent in endless and fruitless discussion on matters to which there is no certain answer, while the poor world perishes. Is it not possible, without being disloyal in any way to the truth of God, or to our consciences, to see these matters in their true perspective and to devote time and prayerful thought to the vital matter of how best to reach the unconverted in our neighbourhood?

The second reason I have in mind is materialism. We have all fallen victims to this in a greater or a lesser degree. Our Lord at the close of His ministry said to His own: "I have overcome the world." His victory was complete and final: He was wholly independent of this world. His source of life was in God. "I live by the Father," said Christ. Now this is the pathway to which we are called. Most of us are completely unaffected by the grosser features of the world, but in other ways we succumb to it. The desire to possess, the love of ease, the inordinate ambition for worldly advancement, these are all things perfectly normal and natural for a man of the world, but they are enemies to the life of wholehearted devotion to Christ and His service. It is to this life that every Christian is called. I am well aware that we must give heed to the legitimate demands of this life, but are we not conscious that too often we are completely dominated by these things, and our hearts have little leisure to be concerned with the interests of Christ in the spread of the gospel? I have known prayer meetings, prior to a special gospel effort, being attended by a mere handful. The Judgment Seat of Christ will surely reveal that too many of us devoted far too much of our time and energy to the things of this world, and all too

little to the service of Christ. It would be well for christian men to institute in their lives a system of priorities, before it is for ever too late.

I want now to speak of the gospel we preach, and how we preach it. It is a cause for some satisfaction, I judge, that modernistic teaching has found no place in our assemblies. There is complete loyalty to the message of the gospel as set forth in the New Testament Scriptures. The atoning death of the sinless Son of God, His triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension to the right hand of God, these still constitute the very heart of the gospel to all the assemblies whose work and witness we are now considering. We believe the gospel stands unchanged from age to age : it is as changeless as God Himself. But may I say here it should not be supposed that every facet of the gospel must be in evidence every time it is preached. Many of our gospel preachers appear to think it would be disloyalty if they failed to introduce in each address every fundamental truth of the gospel. They attempt far too much, and very often in the estimation of their hearers, have accomplished very little. "One thought fixed in the mind," said Spurgeon, "will be better than fifty thoughts made to flit across the ear."

While we are all agreed that the gospel itself remains unchanged and unchanging, the presentation of it may change from age to age, and indeed from place to place. One need only compare the address on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 with Paul's message to the Athenians in Acts 17, to see this amply illustrated. The audiences on those occasions were as different as could be, and the message was suited to their particular need. We are called to preach the gospel of Christ against the background of this contemporary age. It is not topical sermons that are needed. There are far too many of these around, amounting to little more than the latest political news with a religious flavour. What is required is the gospel of Christ, preached within the framework of the sin and fear and insecurity of this modern age. My view is that very many of our gospel preachers have little idea how to proclaim the gospel with relevance to the men and women of our day. There may be many reasons for this, but I want to suggest four.

First of all, there is the obvious fact that many attempt to

do this work who were never called of God. The greater part of my christian life has been spent in a small assembly, and I am conversant with the difficulties of finding suitable preachers in these circumstances. Not a word that I have to say is intended to discourage these small companies. If, however, in order to keep our meetings going, we are compelled to have an "any man ministry", let us confess this to God as the measure of our weakness. Let this never be vaunted before others as the measure of our strength or of our adherence to the New Testament Scriptures. It was said at this conference last year, "Except in cases of dire necessity, a man must refrain from trying to exercise a gift which he has not received." This needs to be taken to heart in our assemblies to-day. The Word of Holy Scripture is quite plain. "He gave *some* to be evangelists." One doubts whether assemblies in general are prepared to carry out the clear teaching of the New Testament, even where it is possible to do it. It has become part of our tradition to have a different preacher each Sunday evening, many of them having to travel a considerable distance, and often one or more local men with gift sitting in the audience. Paul raises the question in Rom. 10: "How shall they preach except they be sent?" The assurance of being sent is vital to anyone who assays to preach to his fellows. In Jeremiah it is put like this: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." The theory that every brother must have his turn would probably be repudiated by many who are, in practice, lending themselves to this wholly unscriptural procedure. I am well aware that every preacher does not become an Apollos overnight, if at all; but we need to stress the necessity for a Divine summons before one commits oneself to the ministry of the gospel. We would also do well to encourage certain of our young men to have their ears open for such a summons. Dr. Jowett has put it like this: "The call of the Eternal must ring through the preacher's soul as clearly as the sound of the morning bells rings through the valleys of Switzerland, calling the peasants to early prayer and praise." If in our assemblies we have to make do with a lower standard than this, let us make the position a matter of constant prayer, but let us not lose sight of the ideal presented in Holy Scripture.

The second reason I want to suggest why the standard of our gospel preaching is not what it should be, is that there is oft-times an obvious lack of preparation. The story is told how a vicar on one occasion said to the Bishop of Lichfield, "Often when I am in the vestry I do not know what I am going to talk about, but I go into the pulpit and preach, and think nothing of it." The Bishop replied, "And you are quite right in thinking nothing of it, for your churchwardens have told me they share your opinion." That, I suggest, is not an unfair criticism of much of our preaching. King David's words might well be taken to heart as we ascend the platform: "Neither will I offer unto the Lord my God that which costs me nothing." The preparation of prayer is, of course, the most vital preparation of all. Every preacher ought to have learnt something of the costliness of prayer, that spiritual conflict that takes place when one has an overwhelming sense of the greatness and sacredness of the preacher's trust, and a deep realization of one's utter inability and unworthiness to fulfil it. How can we hope to speak with relevance and power without such preparation? There must also be the preparation of the message itself. I am not at all qualified to speak to you about homiletics, and I feel sure the bulk of our preachers will never have the opportunity to attend bible colleges. That is no reason why they should not prepare their messages in a painstaking way, trying to envisage all the while the type of person likely to be in the audience, and seeking to present the message in a way to meet their particular need. It would be a helpful exercise for many to write out their message in full. This would be a corrective for mental laziness, and probably a rebuke to self-conceit. It would also prove to us the value of having our material set out in an orderly fashion. Whatever method we adopt, let us be workmen who apply ourselves with diligence and prayer to our holy task.

The third reason I have in mind why so many of our gospel meetings are ineffective is, that the preacher too often appears to be out of touch with modern life. If one were to offer a general and, I trust, kindly criticism of gospel preaching in Scotland, it is far too theological, and often very muddled theology at that. Constant reference is made to Old Testament types, which anyone in touch with reality ought to know

have no meaning to men and women of the world to-day. A knowledge of the Bible is assumed which is really non-existent. In recent months I have heard of intelligent folk leaving our meetings and having to confess that they did not know what the preacher was getting at. One would imagine sometimes that our preachers were living on some remote planet, and were only making infrequent visits to this poor distracted world. I would recommend our younger men to read Dr. McLaren's sermons. There they will find mature thinking on the basic truths of the gospel, presented within the framework of the needs and perplexities of human life.

The last reason I want to mention why our preaching is often irrelevant, is that our congregations are predominantly converted people. We are quickly losing the art of preaching for decisions. How many of our people would find themselves ill at ease if confronted suddenly with an anxious soul: it would be, for most, unaccustomed work. So it is with our preaching. How often we have lost touch with our audience when we have realized that not a single needy soul was present. In contrast to that, how inspiring to be preaching where there are those present who need our message!

A few months back I spent a Lord's day in a small mining assembly, but one that has doubled its membership within five years. There was an air of expectancy in the prayer meeting preceding the gospel meeting. They knew strangers would be coming; some of their number had gone to fetch them. The preaching became joyous and purposeful, and their faith was rewarded when a soul decided for Christ at the end of the meeting. But such assemblies are an exception. In all too many, the christians feel they have fulfilled their obligations by attending the meeting. This cannot, however, be regarded as a true fellowship in the gospel. One has every sympathy with those whose desire to bring others to the gospel meeting has been stifled because of the "any man ministry" which we have mentioned. Sympathy cannot be so strong, however, for those who are for ever complaining about the preaching, but who have little or no burden on their spirit regarding the real purpose of the gospel services.

So far we have thought almost entirely of our normal Sunday evening service. While I believe it can still be a vital part of our witness if properly conducted and supported,

we must not think there is anything sacrosanct about it. It would be difficult indeed to find any precedent for it in the New Testament Scriptures. The elders of our assemblies ought to be alive to the need of finding new ways of winning men and women, if the normal methods are not producing results. It is surely to be deplored if the leaders must always be prodded by those behind. As far as assemblies in Fifeshire are concerned, I think it would be true to say there were never more young men and women in them than now. This has been largely brought about through the annual young people's camp. For the past ten years a band of devoted christian men and women have sought in this way to reap the fruit of the work of Sunday school and bible class, and God has crowned their labours with His blessing. I know that other districts have had similar experience, but there is, I believe, ample scope for an extension of such work.

There are, however, many other ways which in most areas remain unexplored. I am sure a regular house-to-house visitation would prove much more effective than many of our gospel meetings, or alternatively, prove a great stimulus to such meetings. We should lay Spurgeon's words to heart : " If we do not win souls we should mourn, as the husbandman who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale."

I now want to say a word on personal evangelism, and I do so with considerable diffidence. There are doubtless those whose temperament and natural endowments fit them in a special way for this work, but the lack of these does not relieve us of our obligation in this matter. I have known those who seem to be without any such natural advantage, being most assiduous and successful in personal soul-winning.

The basic necessity for such service is the conscious enjoyment of the christian life. The memory of a past vision will not suffice here, there must be the inspiration of a present one. " What I live by," declared Augustine, " I impart." We can only impart with confidence and conviction what we are enjoying in personal experience. This kind of witness is in a different category from public preaching. It is a service in which every christian may take part. Indeed, history shows that this is how the gospel spread with such rapidity in the

first two centuries. Our personal witness may consist of handing over a well-chosen booklet without a word necessarily being spoken. If this is done from love to Christ and to the souls of men, we can confidently leave the results with Him. I am sure that nothing would be more calculated to give freshness and relevance to our gospel preaching than the regular contacting of men and women for Christ. This is a matter that many of us no doubt feel we ought to be much more concerned about.

My last word to you is about our urgent need for a fresh sense of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. May I say to some, that to disregard the practical things of which we have spoken, is not the way to secure the Spirit's help, and moreover, we must not think that those who prepare their messages with care and diligence, and those who make becoming arrangements for public services, are regarding these as substitutes for the Spirit's power. But above and beyond every other need in the witness of our assemblies there is this, a humble, prayerful, expectant recognition that, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

I believe there are few companies of christians who would respond more readily and wholeheartedly if a lead in this all-important matter were given in the assemblies throughout our land. It is the special responsibility of the elders to face up to the demands of God in their own lives, to present themselves to their fellow christians as men who have committed themselves utterly to the Lordship of Christ, as those in whose hearts the Spirit of God dwells without a rival, and to say as Gideon said long ago, "Look on me and do thou likewise."

The leaders of our assemblies must accept a large measure of the censure if things are barren in their midst. Very often the spiritual condition of an assembly is but the reflection of the spiritual condition of its leaders. It is no secret that there is a high price to pay if we would know the fulness of the Spirit's power in our personal lives and in the life of our churches. The question is, however, if this is the secret of blessing in our witness for God, and I am sure, we are all persuaded it is, can any price be too high? We are convinced that our assemblies are largely failing in one of their major functions. It is true we have often been careless as to method, and often content with a standard of witness that was un-

worthy of the gospel, but more serious still, we have neglected, individually and corporately, to wait prayerfully, expectantly, and selflessly for the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

If our desperate need for the living breath of the Spirit of God, which was such a feature of apostolic days, were felt by a few in each assembly, we might yet look forward to times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This would indeed be a true return to New Testament simplicity.

Sunday (3 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.)

DISCUSSION

MR. A. J. ASHWELL : Mr. Campbell put his finger on one of the most important things when he said that materialism is playing too much part in our lives. We give too much time to the things of this world, to the exclusion of the much more important things which God has entrusted to us.

MR. J. W. LAING (Mill Hill) : The complacent, self-satisfied audience ruins gospel preachers. A complacent preacher who does not preach the gospel in an interesting manner fails in his task. It is up to us to try to get these two wrong things put right. Let us also arouse ourselves so that each tries to bring one unconverted person and seeks by prayer and interest to follow that one person up and win that one person. Such concerted effort would achieve results.

Mr. Ruoff then led the meeting in prayer.

MR. H. F. R. CATHERWOOD : Might we be told how the London Bible College can help us in raising this ministry of the assemblies to a higher standard ?

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : The London Bible College have an objective in all their teaching, to make effective witnesses.

There are nearly 140 whole time students this year, who for three years are studying diligently to equip themselves to be men who need not be ashamed because they rightly divide the Word of Truth.

There are many correspondence courses, and also big evening classes attended by some hundreds, in London and other centres such as Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Belfast, Dublin, and other places as far afield as Melbourne in Australia, where these courses are diligently taught by selected men. I

do most sincerely and earnestly advocate that more of the young men of the assemblies should be encouraged in one direction or another to equip themselves. It is deplorable that there are many young men of ability in our assemblies who say, " We would, but there is no one to teach us the way to handle this great overwhelming matter of making Christ known to our fellow men. We want to do it, but no one is teaching us." They are left to do the best they can, and the best they can is often very ineffective.

There are already a number of young brethren from the assemblies who are taking the full three years' course, some of whom have already proved themselves most effective amongst our assemblies.

There is no denominational bias. Young men who are thoughtful are encouraged to face questions out for themselves and find their own solid conviction as a result of faithful Bible teaching, and that is what it is producing, and to our great encouragement has produced all over the world already, a large number of fine, solid, strong men, and women too, who are doing this work in a way they never would have if they had not had this basic training. We have to praise God for the increasing number of young men and young women gathering in our assemblies, many of them full of promise. But they do most urgently need good equipment. Many of them need, of course, financial help, in order to take the training, and many of them are receiving it from one direction or another.

MR. J. J. STORDY (Wolverhampton) : If you have never opened your home as a place of personal evangelism, you have missed a great deal of blessing. It is a great joy, as one's own children grow up, to do personal evangelism with their age groups, with your own children and that particular age group. The difficulties of understanding young people seem to disappear because you understand your own children. In the village where I live we have opened our home to all and sundry, and every week we have about forty young people who come every Friday evening for a social evening, an " At Home ", and at the end we have an epilogue. That friendship and joyous get-together has been richly blessed of the Lord. Over the years we have had the joy of seeing about fifteen give their hearts to the Lord.

Here I want to speak to elders in the assembly. We take Church people, Methodists and nondescripts, who have very little understanding of the Scriptures whatsoever, and they have no understanding of what is expected of them when they go to a service. We take them to assemblies and to rallies, and gradually they become curious to know, and go to other services. Most of them are high school young people and are thoughtful. They have heard spiritual ministry, and they are going on with the Lord. Only recently two of the young people approached some of the elders and were baptized and are in fellowship.

MR. P. RUOFF : Mr. Campbell spoke of the importance of conscious enjoyment of the experience of God. I think that is vital when you are talking to people. In the eighteenth century there was a contemporary of Wesley, a man who until he was sixty-four could not read or write, William Carvosso. I noted in the margin of his diary at least eighty-eight cases of conversion, and I am certain these were only samples. After he learned to read and write he lived for nineteen years. He lived to eighty-four, and wrote the most uplifting letters. So far as the record goes, he seldom spoke to any person on the road, no matter where it was, without that person subsequently being brought under a conviction of sin. I believe he spoke with such impact—he felt God’s message burning in his soul when he was dealing with individuals—that God often used it to bring men under conviction.

Let us see to it that day by day we are in the conscious enjoyment of God’s presence. May I make one other remark? Henry Dorney (1613) made this remark in his “Contemplations”, which has been with me ever since I read it: “Every Christian ought to labour at being more familiar with God than with anybody else, speaking to Him about everything.” I believe it is a vital matter if we are going to speak to souls, that we should be in the conscious enjoyment of the things we speak about.

MR. L. SLARK (Sidcup) : Mr. Campbell said gospel preachers are out of touch with modern life, and frequently out of touch with their audience. That is one of the results of our system of brethren going from place to place. One of the reasons why the ministry some of our friends in various denominations have is so fruitful, is that a man has an opportunity of getting

to know his audience, and an opportunity of preaching the gospel in a systematic way.

Would Mr. Campbell be kind enough to tell us whether he thinks there is a place in our assembly life for a teaching ministry of the gospel, and whether elders in assemblies should take this responsibility to themselves, and use the local gift in the assembly, brethren who are known, not only because they go to the meeting, but because they live in the town, and people in the town know them for their godly life and other characteristics.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL : I think it would be dangerous to generalize. Obviously, if some of the folks in the meeting are bringing friends to a meeting, they want the preacher to preach for a decision. When I preach the gospel at home, I feel pretty certain some will have made an effort to get friends in. It is a normal thing for me to know one or two will be coming, probably one or two from the office in which I work will have been invited to come. I think of them particularly, and their background. I think that is a tremendous help in preaching the gospel. There is a lot to be said for that, provided you have the confidence of the people in your assembly, and you know if you are preaching they are going to bring people in. If I felt they were not, I would not preach.

MR. G. W. ROBSON (Streatham) : Between 1948 to 1956 there were 130 speakers for 450 meetings invited to our assembly. Have we not swung from a "one man ministry" to an extreme of disjointedness. Is this based on any Scriptural principle? Is it likely to be effective? Is the bond of sympathy between the christian witness and the non-christian lost by this discontinuity?

The local church is never going to be effective as long as two of its three church meetings are almost invariably in the hands of a stranger to the assembly. There is a general assumption that the local church is not adequate to carry out the gospel witness.

DR. C. C. HARVEY (Doncaster) : Do elders regard it as one of their responsibilities to encourage their young men to write out sermons full length, for the elders to mark with blue pencil, and tutor them carefully in preparation and in their earlier teaching years?

The other thing is the whole question of Sunday night strategy. Can I put it in a few propositions :

(1) Declaring the whole counsel of God is the duty of the elders of every assembly. (2) Declaring the whole counsel of God is the only reliable way of convicting and converting adult non-christians. Nothing less than the whole Bible—anything less is not the gospel.

I remember Mr. George Goodman once talking about conviction of sin. He said, "Let them see that this book is against them." If we do not apply the whole Bible we cannot expect to convert. (3) We need to return from the oversimplification of so-called gospel preaching which leaves out most of the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, the very parts which would establish belief in the majesty of God and His holy judgment and purpose. Take the great passages in Jeremiah, which we never use. It needs progressive exposition of the whole book to convince people of God's truth. (4) The Sunday evening sermon is the great opportunity for the progressive preaching which would benefit christians equally with non-christians. At present many of the believers attend on Sunday evenings in what is little more than a spirit of patronage. They go because "we had better support our own meeting". It is a wrong attitude. (5) We cannot provide the whole counsel of God so long as we arrange for forty or fifty different preachers a year, without any coherent spiritual preparation as between them. It is pottering at evangelism.

I believe it is consecutive preaching by the local men, praying and preparing together month by month that counts, with good speakers from outside for special purposes now and then ; and it would save hundreds of pounds in fares too !

DR. A. HANTON : I would strongly plead for a more general practice of having one speaker for a consecutive series, a month if necessary. During August, I spoke at our recently opened new hall in Cambridge for five Sundays, and although there is only a membership of about thirty in the assembly, about 100 people, more than half of whom were unconverted, were present each night.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL : I should like to crystallize the point Dr. Hanton made, in our stress of the use of local gifts. We

must not rely on that supposed local gift if results do not occur. The idea of having local gift is excellent, if there is local gift to which the folks in the meeting can confidently bring someone. Why bring a man 100 miles if you have a man in your hall? but do not persist in local gift if people are not coming. We must not put a premium on ignorance. We are living in a time when people go to school till they are fifteen. There must always be room in the church for an Isaiah, a Haggai or an Amos. Some come through University. We thank God for them, if they are Spirit-filled men; others, like Amos, from the desert, untrained men, but if they are filled with the Holy Spirit, we thank God for them all.

I want to underline the point made: we are all convinced that the basic need is a spiritual need. That does not really do away with the necessity of thinking of ways and means. As those who are responsible in assemblies, we must think of the best way of reaching men and women. Any way will not do; it is unworthy of the gospel.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN: This discussion, if it produces in all our minds a holy dissatisfaction with anything but a successful approach to preaching the gospel and the winning of souls, means we shall never sit down complacently to anything else. Ways and means will adjust themselves.

Sunday (5 p.m.)

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN (*Chairman*)

SIMPLICITY OF CONDUCT

MR. F. N. MARTIN

As this conference has proceeded, it has shown every evidence of becoming more personal in its approach. I do not think we shall forget our gathering together for worship this morning. I should think that it is probably indelibly marked upon our memories, and will be for years to come. God was very graciously present with us. I think everyone felt Him to be speaking to us, and now we come to what is, perhaps, the most personal of all the sessions that we have held so far. We are to consider the subject of "The simplicity of christian conduct", and it rightly comes, I think, as the climax of our conference.

AS a background to our thoughts let me read you a few verses from St. Luke 14, from the twenty-fifth verse: "And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

Are you a disciple? Well, we must begin at the beginning. There was a great simplicity, as we have been hearing, in the life and worship of the early Church: because the first christians had one consuming aim, and one controlling purpose—to glorify God, and to bear witness to His Son as Lord and Saviour. This was not the powerful impact on their minds of an intellectual concept: it was a driving urge that was basic to their whole being, wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. They did not complicate their *belief* with questions of casuistry or metaphysical arguments: they set out to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and to serve the exalted Christ with all their endeavour. They did not complicate their *church association* by questioning each other

about their former attachments, or their religious antecedents, or as to their attitude to, or practice in non-essentials ; but they welcomed all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity : and they really believed that all such were one in Him. They did not complicate their *worship* with ritual or rubrics, or sensual or visual apparatus : they recognized the presence and authority of the Lord in their midst, and trusted His Spirit to direct their worship. They did not complicate their *witness* with enticing words of man's wisdom : but bore plain and heartfelt testimony to Christ, and to His work for men. Finally, and this is now our thought for to-night, they did not complicate the *conduct* of their lives with worldly ambition, with self-pleasing, with entangling associations, or, above all, with sinful lusts : they practised what the Quakers are accustomed to call " absolute commitment " to the interests of Christ. So single-minded were they that they had no sense at all of pursuing any personal interests, their own personal concerns shrank of their own accord to an irreducible minimum. They did not regard their property, or their strength, or their time as being for the pursuit of their own pleasure, or prosperity, or prestige, or privilege : such things just did not count with them. All they were, and all they possessed, were wholly and without reserve at the disposal of their Lord and Master in a heart-whole devotion that was utterly simple.

Now as we study the record in the Acts, we come to realize that this simplicity resulted from an intense concentration on one absorbing thing—or, rather, Person—that rendered them indifferent to the lure of the world, impervious to the assaults of the Evil One, and fearless in the presence of opposition. Study the behaviour of Peter and John when they first come into contact with organized opposition from the Sanhedrin : you see them standing up, quite reckless as regards their life, their bodies, their safety, their possessions, their interests. They stand firm for Christ, and nothing else matters. Their sense of values had been completely changed, and their sense of proportion had become acutely clear. They knew where life's true emphasis lay, and what was, and what was not worth while. And this was not the first flush of an uninformed and immature enthusiasm, but it was the constraining power of the love of Christ wrought deeply within by the Holy

Ghost. Their bodies had become the temple of that Holy One, and His burning presence purged, and purified, and energized, and motivated their whole life. Nothing else mattered but living for God. And in absolute simplicity they said, "to me to live is Christ".

Now there have been in all ages people who have been utterly dedicated to some cause, or person, or idea: the human spirit is capable of total absorption in something that it considers worth while. And the optimum of this worthwhileness is found in christianity, where it is centred in the precious and adorable Lord Jesus Christ. But because He is absent and invisible, except to faith, we tend to have regard to that which is visible and tangible, and we easily find ourselves committed to something that appeals to our minds and our senses, rather than make demands on our faith. Life is at its simplest when there is a total commitment to one absorbing object: and the man who can say, "This one thing I do," has achieved simplification of life in its highest form. We are told that this is narrow, and is evidence of a one-track mind: that we ought to have a wider range of interests and sympathies than that. The fact is that the totally-committed christian *is* narrow in the sense that his range of interests and activities is limited in that he deliberately excludes from his life that whole range of things which could be called sinful, or doubtful, or that competes with the interests of his Lord: but he is extraordinarily broad in his sympathies because they are co-extensive with those of his Lord.

One of the spiritual clichés most frequently used among us speaks of having "a single eye to God's glory". By this we do not mean having only one eye like some Cyclops: we mean having a spiritual regard which is directed towards only one object, refusing distraction by any other object, however attractive. And this, of course, is what the Apostle was leading to when he said: "This one thing I do," for he was referring to athletics, and to the obvious fact that if a runner allows his attention to be diverted, and his concentration thereby reduced, his chance of winning is remote. Another cliché we have is, "My utmost for His highest." But that expresses just this kind of simplicity of aim and concentration of effort, of which we are thinking. Only the best represents simplicity: anything less than the best introduces complexity.

Anything that is less than the best admits a whole host of competing objects. The best is at the apex of the pyramid. It stands alone in simplicity : anything lower, or less, immediately introduces complexity.

Now I think that is where we have got in our thinking at this conference so far. We have become aware that God is calling us to simplification, which we refuse to think of in terms of procedure, because we realize that the spiritual is the driving force behind it all, and is the governing factor of it all, that there should be this simplification in our hearts, and in our activities, and in our associations, and in our witness. And if there is to be this simplification in our lives, then as we come to the close of this conference we should, first of all, enquire of ourselves : Have I admitted into my life things that are competitive with Jesus Christ? I am not now thinking of sinful things. I ought to be able to take it for granted that I am dead against sin : that I refuse to have any truck with it ; that I have banished it with the whole consent of my being. That must be our starting-point. But without being definitely sinful, or morally wrong, there may be a host of things in our lives which are competitive with the interests of our Lord, and only He, by His Spirit, can teach us where His interests lie in any given matter, or in any given sphere. It is the man who is led of the Spirit, who is walking in the Spirit, who will learn step by step that simplification of life and purpose that keeps him true to Christ in a world of allurements, and entanglements and distractions. It is to be said that many of the competing things are in themselves very good and commendable. But the fact remains that a good thing can be highly competitive with the best : and, therefore, it is necessary for us at a conference like this to raise the tone of our spiritual life until the only One Who matters is the Lord Jesus Christ our Master. And He said to us, did He not? this afternoon : " If any man hate not his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Therefore we have to confess that the true disciple of Jesus Christ must be a very rare person.

Now we are to consider this matter in its various implications : and one is called in the syllabus " A disciplined life." How we hate that term ! How it speaks to us of repression, and austerity, and all those things which our natural spirit hates, and shrinks from ! We want to live a full, and free, and

abounding life ; we do not want to be hemmed in by irksome restrictions ; we do not want to be narrowed down into a groove ; we want liberty for our spirit to expand, and for our life to reach the fulness that Christ offers to us. Why, then, should we discipline ourselves, and be for ever denying ourselves ? Listen. If you have learned to die with Christ that question does not arise. If you have made a total commitment to Jesus Christ, and linked your life with Him intimately and completely, then His interests are yours, His life is yours, His range of interests and sympathies is yours, and His life in all its fulness is yours. And the things of which you think you are being deprived, and the restricting you think is going to take place, is purely on a fleshly basis. It has no value, and you are better without it. You need not fear losing anything from your life which is competitive with the best interests of Christ. I would put it the other way, and say, that anything that is competitive with the best interests of Christ is definitely and positively deleterious in your life, and it will cause harm and damage which will spread and grow. And the paradox that we so often quote about " my freedom " being " His grand control " comes true. The man who is totally committed to Jesus Christ is the happiest man in the world, and he is in no sense whatever being " cribbed, cabined and confined ", but his spirit rises and expands because, as he displaces that which is of self, the Spirit of God fills his soul with His own sweet fulness, with His joy, and peace, and blessedness : and there is an absence of conflict.

Our being is made up of many parts. One part of our nature craves for something, and having got it, will retain it with all its power. There are other parts of our being which take exception to that : they use a theological term in speaking of it. They speak of the flesh and the spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other ; and there is conflict. Let Jesus Christ be your Master. Let Him deal with these things in your life ; and the conflict ceases. So David prays : " Unite my heart to fear Thy name." Unite my heart to Thee, and every part of my being, and every power that I possess. It means passing a unanimous resolution in favour of Christ. Simplification is attained. Complexity is hurtful and painful because it induces conflict which will grow, the more sensitive we become to the things of the Spirit. In

fact, the effect of the Spirit's working in us will be to make that conflict so intolerable that we are driven to Christ, and we say to Him : " Have Thine own way with me. What a fool I was not to do this before ! " It is very easy to talk like this, but we find it exceedingly hard to do it, but God is very gracious, and very tender, and very patient. There must be this self-discipline. We have got to take ourselves in hand, and this is a detailed thing, and it is a deliberate thing ; it is a thing which we have got to set ourselves to do : we have got to see that the flesh is subdued to the Spirit. We cannot be passive in the matter, and expect God to do it, in spite of us. God's control operates through our self-control, and that is a purposeful thing, and it requires very much firmness of purpose and perseverance. We have got to take our lives in hand, and let those things go that once we enjoyed, and which we know are a hindrance to our christian life. Let us do everything whereby the flesh is mortified. And it would not do us any harm at all to practise fasting, in some measure, and in some way or other, whereby this may be achieved. There has to be this deliberate austerity in our lives ; something we keep to ourselves ; something between ourselves and God ; nothing that we regard as meritorious in itself, but something which will conduce to that end, " that the flesh may be subdued to the Spirit ". Let us learn to say " No ". Let them call you " kill joys ". But if what you do is done in the fear of God, and in the power of the Spirit, you will go about with a smile on your face, and laughter in your heart, because Christ is with you, and His presence is all-joyous ; and there is no sense whatever of loss when you discipline yourself in the interests of Christ. I plead with you to practise deliberately and systematically the disciplining of your life.

I am deliberately avoiding any reference to specific things : the Spirit of God will teach you where there is need to discipline yourself. There is a sense in which the servant of God who sets out to concentrate on the interests of Christ pursues his Lord. " My soul followeth hard after Thee." And that man has to have a very careful regard indeed to anything that would hold him back ; and in this matter he has to see that that instrument given him by God for the detection of that which is inimical to God is acutely sensitized. His conscience, once seared by sin, and ruined in its working, has been restored

in Christ, and is now an instrument, so to speak, readjusted, and ready to be instructed and used by the Spirit. And as he reads the Word of God, and gets into the presence of God, and as he is exercised in heart before God, his conscience is exercised unto holiness, and can become in the hands of the Holy Spirit, the voice of God in the soul, teaching him what things are in the best interests of the Lord. It will not be a negative thing, but a positive thing, because all the time it is pointing us onward and upward to Christ. I am quite sure that Christ as the goal of our life and our affection is the answer to the problems in our assemblies. And in exercising our consciences before God we need to be very dependent upon the Holy Spirit. You know what sort of consciences some people develop : and this is a matter where the control of the Spirit is very necessary. I am quite sure that it is the personal study and meditation in the Word of God that is the appointed means of instructing our conscience, together with the ministry of the Word of God by His equipped servants. That is His way of showing us His way. Now that is a different thing from letting our conscience come into bondage to other people's conscience, of which there is at times, and in places, a very real danger. There are those, perhaps, in our assemblies, who would like to impose their conscience on their brethren, which, in the light of Scripture, is a very improper thing to do, as you will learn in 1 Cor. 8 and Romans 14. I must not impose my conscience on my brethren : and, subject to the exercise of much grace, I must not let my conscience be imposed upon by other people. That does not mean to say that I must adopt a harsh and ungracious attitude when they say : " If you do that you will offend the brethren," but it does mean that I must reserve to myself the right to go to the Word of God, and to go into the presence of God, and obtain my convictions, and have my conscience instructed and adjusted in the presence of God by the Spirit of God in relation to specific matters, and be prepared to stand by my conviction, and not to allow myself to be brought into bondage. And, having said that, it needs to be safeguarded with the graciousness of our Lord Jesus.

We are to consider this matter also from the point of view of people who look at us from the outside. What sort of person is the totally-committed man going to appear in the eyes of

the worldling? Well, of course, he will be a complete enigma. He is living by opinions and convictions that are opposed to those that are current in the world, and in the daily Press, and on the wireless; these are all settled for him by direct reference to the eternal Word of God. And this is foolishness to the world. Therefore he must expect himself to be regarded as an oddity, which, in relation to other people, he surely is: and if he is not, it is time he thought about it. Never mind being thought an oddity. The Lord's brothers said: "He is mad." Paul was called mad. And I suppose the more concentrated and absorbed we are in Christ, the more we become people of a one-track mind in relation to Christ, the more we shall be incomprehensible, and out of affinity with people in the world. But what they must not be able to say is that they would much rather have to do with someone else than with us. We have got not only to be correct, but above all, gracious. And I am sure that the operation of Christ in the christian heart is intended to induce graciousness, a quality that is terribly lacking in most of us. And so by all means let us be other-worldly. Let us be absorbed in that with which other people are not in the least in sympathy; but let us not be so aloof from them, so out of sympathy with them, that they write us off. No one could have been more single-minded than the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. Yet He went and sat with publicans and sinners: He had meals with them, and He chatted with them, and He was friendly to them. He was a friendly Person.

Now there is a deeper aspect of this that I would just like to consider with you. How is it all to come about? We have had many references this afternoon to being filled with the Spirit: and it was assumed, if not said, that all our deficiencies and defects in our work and witness, all our ineffectiveness, will just melt away, will disappear completely, if we are all filled with the Spirit. We have the example of the early christians to prove that, because they were highly successful in all that they did for God, and in their living together, and their prayers were answered, and great grace was upon them all, and they were filled with the Spirit. Having said that it is desirable to be filled with the Spirit, have we any conception as to what that means? "*Filled with the Spirit*"; the most Holy God, the eternal Spirit of

holiness ; intolerant of evil in any shape or form. *Filled !* This is not the time to develop that thought in its many implications. I am glad to say there is coming back into our assemblies a consideration of this matter after a long lapse of time, following the discredit into which the subject came some thirty to forty years ago when the Devil spoiled it by exaggeration and distortion. But the fact remains that in the Scripture it is written that you are to be filled with the Spirit. It is mandatory.

Now we have had the foundations laid for us to-day. The requisite condition is that we should die to self. Jesus said : " If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Mr. Goodman asked, Where did a person have to follow his Lord to ? To the place of execution, there to carry his cross as Jesus did : to the place where he is nailed to it. And not until that has taken place can God fill us with His Holy Spirit. I think it is imperative also for us to believe that He can and will do this for us. This is not the privilege of a few ultra-saintly folk : it is intended to be normal Christian experience. And we should be wrong if we left this place thinking to ourselves : " It is all very well talking about being filled with the Spirit, but a thing like that is not for me." It just is. And if we rest at any point short of that, we are sinning against God's commandment. Therefore we are bound to consider this matter, and to ask ourselves : " Am I filled with the Spirit ? No, I am not. Do I want to be filled with the Spirit ? Yes I do. Am I willing to be filled with the Spirit ? I am not so sure." I do not think we must necessarily think that this is to be a critical occasion and experience in the life of everybody. It may be, and often is, that many a christian is wrought upon by God, here a little, there a little ; some to-day, some to-morrow, day by day reading the Word, casting themselves upon Him, exercised in heart about Him, searching their lives, banishing evil from their lives by the aid of God, until they are brought to the point where He can fill them.

One other comment I would make upon this, and that is, that being filled with the Spirit in Scripture is always associated with prayer. Naturally it is not a thing that we must think lightly of. We hardly dare to speak of it because it is so sacred, and so profound in its working. But it is proper for

us to pray that God, in His infinite grace and patience with us, will bring us to this, and so deal with us, and so enable us to deal with sin, that as things go from our lives which are harmful to us, He may be able to fill us. The result is quite startling. Let us remember this also, that as it requires the surrendered will and simple faith to acquire this great boon, so it requires the surrendered will and simple faith to retain it. Let us not think that we may be filled to-day with His Spirit, and so we need never be concerned about it again. It is the quiet maintenance of the spiritual life in Christ, by His Word, by prayer, that makes it possible for God to fill us with His Holy Spirit. I remember Mr. George Goodman once saying : " Holiness is character, and character is a thing wrought in us by the Holy Spirit." So let us not suppose that we can unthinkingly jump into this experience. But let us pray that God, working within us by His grace, may bring us, step by step, stage by stage, into an attitude before Him of complete self-abnegation, and a complete enthronement of Christ in our lives, so that He may be able to fill us with His blessed Spirit : and of this we may be quite sure, that as soon as the conditions exist, He will unfailingly do it.

Sunday (7.30 p.m.)

DISCUSSION

MR. W. G. NORRIS (Leigh-on-Sea) : In referring to, or describing the local church, which of the following two words is most frequently used in the New Testament : church, or assembly ? If the word " church " is more frequently used, why do we use the word " assembly " ?

MR. F. N. MARTIN : The New Testament is written in the Greek and it does not use either word. The word " congregation " stands for a translation of the Greek word in each case.

MR. E. F. EOLL (Zurich) : The chief thing is that we should realize it is a company of those who have been called out by the Lord, and they belong to the One Who has called them. On the continent the word has been rather maltreated, because they speak of *the* assembly as if they were the only ones who met together in the presence of the Lord.

MR. E. W. ROGERS (Gt. Bookham) : The word "assembly" is a true English translation of the word *ecclesia*. The word "church" has come to mean a congregation of people gathered together for a certain religious purpose. The word "assembly" has become a kind of tag. We seem to fight shy of using the word "church", and we prefer to say "assembly"; we may be more accurate in doing that, but it seems to me to be inconsequential whether we use one word or the other.

MR. A. P. CAMPBELL (Leven) : A person put this question to me at the week-end, "Would it not be more reasonable to teach our children to say, 'We are going to church,' instead of saying, 'We are going to the assembly'?" By using the word 'assembly' their teachers think that they belong to some queer body. This is a practical question and does not depend on the origin of words. My advice is, Tell your children that they are going to *church*.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : We have been making the mistake for many years, wittingly or unwittingly, of using the term "assembly", not as a company of people gathered together as a church, but as something exclusive. I am glad to note that the term "local church" is coming more into use. That is all to the good. Do not let us use the word "assembly" as a tag, employing it as a denominational label, and thereby being untrue to the truths we are trying to express.

CHAIRMAN : Mr. Martin believes that some of the young men in our assemblies have questions in their minds, and he is going to voice them on their behalf.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : I speak as one of the junior members of the convening body. I have been talking to one or two of the younger brethren over the week-end and this seems to have emerged. They have listened to all that has been said with respect, and they are inclined to say : Can someone crystallize the matter, and say what it all adds up to, and what exactly is the distinctive position occupied by the people called Brethren? What is there, after all, in this "simplicity" that is not in the other denominations? Cannot the things of which we have been speaking here be found in many good evangelical, nonconformist churches? What

is there that is special to the Brethren? And is that special identity really significant and important? Is it just a question of the Brethren being a bit better than others are?

MR. G. C. D. HOWLEY : The christian assembly is a true expression of the one Body of Christ. There can be no doubt that the early assemblies were pioneers in teaching the great lessons of christian unity.

In the local church rule is vested in a group of elders, rather than in one man ; this is most likely to give balance. Elders help one another and at the same time check one another. And the strength of their united counsel does much to help forward the saints of God in the development of their spiritual life and experience.

Another thing in which our assembly differs from other bodies of christians is that the assembly is autonomous. You cannot describe all the assemblies as being in one spiritual condition, because the spiritual state of one assembly is not necessarily like that of one five miles away. Each church flourishes, or does not flourish, according to its maintenance of fellowship with Christ. This autonomy of the local churches has been one of the great things that has been used by God to preserve us from modernistic doctrines in the assemblies. The contrast to that is centralization, and that means that if things go wrong at the heart, they go wrong everywhere. While one assembly can influence another assembly their very autonomy is a great spiritual strength.

Another thing is that in the assembly, where it is spiritual, there is a true recognition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Of course assemblies do not expect that a man must have an academic training before he is competent to preach the Word, though there are many evangelical christians who seem to think that unless a man has been ordained, he is really not competent to expound the Bible. But it would seem obvious that if a man has had any form of training for life, whatever it may be, his gifts may indeed be better marshalled for the service of God. An undisciplined mind is not the best medium for handling the Word of God. A first ministry may be the giving of a five-minute reading with comment at the Lord's Supper, and that might give the church evidence of some latent spiritual gift.

Of course, in the assembly there will be the true recognition of the christian priesthood so that there is liberty of the Spirit of God for a brother to pray or to give thanks, as he may be led.

May I mention one other thing, and that is that the simplicity of the observance of the Lord's supper is quite a distinct thing still in assembly circles. (In some of the nonconformist churches the ministration is not confined or limited to any ordained ministry.)

These things occur to me as being distinctive things in themselves, and taking them all together, they are a remarkable testimony to the validity of our christian witness in our assembly life, always provided that the assembly itself is spiritual; and they are things that can influence the whole of christendom.

MR. F. N. MARTIN : Is not the division of christians into clergy and laity in itself an infringement of spiritual principles? What are the other basic spiritual principles for which we stand, and for which other christian bodies do not stand?

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : I would like to call attention to a scriptural analogy. When God called Israel—and we, of course, are His spiritual Israel—out of Egypt, He called them with the express purpose that they should be a peculiar people and different from every other nation, and the difference would be this: they would not have any constitution; they would not have any national government; they would not have a king; that God Himself would be their King, it would be a theocracy; they would have to look to God and He would be all-sufficient for them. That was His purpose, and it would have succeeded if they had been spiritually-minded and devoted to God. They failed utterly in practice and had recourse to other methods. They said, "Let us have a king." Why? That they might be like other nations. Let this thing be properly organized, they said. This constant looking to God makes too big demands on us. If we had a king we should know where we are. He would govern us and we should know exactly how to behave. We should worship God just as well. This is an analogy, I take it, of the Church of God. When God called out His spiritual Israel and redeemed them, He said, You are going to be a peculiar people;

you are going to be different from any other organization of people that has ever existed before, and the difference is going to be this : that I am going to be central, that all your church life and all your spiritual life is going to be corporately centred upon Me, and your worship will all be controlled by God the Holy Spirit. Such was the purpose of God for His Church : and in so far as the Church has turned aside to carnal methods and human organization, it has failed.

Our aim as assemblies is to get back as well as we can to that original purpose of God when He called out a people to Himself. We gather round the one Lord and we look to Him for direction and guidance without any form of organization, however much it may be justified, and appear to be expedient. That is the difference between our assemblies and the organized churches.

MR. J. J. STORDY (Wolverhampton) : The Brethren are a Bible-teaching people. You may send your young people to Bristol, or to Birmingham, or to Wolverhampton, and you know that in the assemblies they will be taught the Word of God. That, to me, is an outstanding feature of the assemblies. It is not found to the same extent in any other group of churches that I know.

MR. MONTAGUE GOODMAN : Some of the Baptist churches, in terms of evangelism, do put us to shame. But there is no guarantee that a convert in one of those churches removing to another district, is going to find himself in a Baptist church which is pure in doctrine. We thank God that we know the Word of God is proclaimed and taught in all our assemblies. And I hope the lucid replies that have been given to-night will be very helpful and, indeed, fully satisfy our young men.

Sunday (8.30 p.m.)

Chairman : MR. W. G. NORRIS (Leigh-on-Sea)
(In the much-regretted absence of Mr. Harold St. John,
through illness, the closing address was entrusted to
Mr. J. Smart, U.S.A.)

CLOSING ADDRESS

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

MR. J. SMART (U.S.A.)

IT has been a great pleasure and a distinct privilege to have been able to share with you the fellowship of this week-end. I have never attended a conference quite like this before, and it will be a cherished memory for years to come, if one is spared to look back on these days, and to speak of it with brethren in America and Canada, among whom I am privileged to labour.

Now a good deal of time was spent at one of our meetings on the words from Psalm 27: 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after : that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." Then again, in connection with the messages which have been given, particularly the closing part of Mr. Campbell's address, and of Mr. Martin's, and of Mr. Montague Goodman's, emphasis was placed on this, that basic to the whole situation was the need for a recovery of spiritual vision, and spiritual power : and it was pointed out that if the Spirit of God was allowed to move amongst us unhindered, many of the problems which confront us will disappear. That the fact of our being Spirit-filled men will lead to a correction of all these other things that perplex us. There must be in our lives, first of all, this spiritual power, and other things in our assembly lives, important though they may be, are only secondary. We may have splendid machinery, but if there is no power there, it won't work. We must have the power of God working in our midst.

I am thinking of the crisis in the history of the children of

Israel. In Exodus 33: 13, Moses prayed : “ If I have found grace in Thy sight shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight.” The history of Israel began with a revelation of the glory of God. In the book of the Revelation, in the last chapter, we read : “ The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The whole thing is alive with movement. Whatever may be wrong in the church, or the assembly, it is the revelation of Christ there that sets the church in motion. And it is seeing Him that makes all the difference, having a vision of Him. “ I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” says Moses. “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after : that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple.” The God of glory appeared to Abraham : a wonderful thing started from there. And when the time came there was another manifestation of God’s glory. God said : “ I am come down to deliver.” “ Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law.” There you have a groaning nation and a lonely shepherd. God is going to bring this groaning nation out of slavery. He is going to speak to the heart of one man : and a great deal happens when God speaks to the heart of one man. And He came to this man of God at Horeb. And Moses saw the burning bush, and it was not consumed. And he said : “ I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” There are wonderful things to be seen in London. Your Houses of Parliament, and the River Thames—liquid history. But there is one thing that is far more important than the sights of London—it is this revelation of God in the soul that has been set in motion. What are all these things compared with the revelation of God ! “ And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush.” God is waiting for us to take a little time to turn aside. Our difficulty in New York is the constant rush there : the people running down into one subway and down into another like rabbits into a warren ; telephones ringing all the time. There are times when nothing but a resolute desire will lead a man to turn aside, so that the Lord may speak with him. “ I beseech Thee show me Thy glory.” We are caught up in such a whirl of things, and it is difficult to avoid it. It all has to do with this twentieth century in which we live : and times of

quiet seem quite out of the question. But if we do not turn aside from time to time, and give God a chance to speak to us, we are going to miss hearing His voice. And God said to Moses : " Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." God was waiting to disclose to Moses His purpose and His power. When the inward condition was remedied God was able to empower him : and with his shepherd's crook, Moses became the rod of God, as he stretched it out, and opened up the Red Sea that the people of Israel might pass over in safety. " I beseech Thee show me Thy glory." It was the revelation of God that set the whole thing in motion.

But ere long we find these people, who had experienced God's might and power, gathered round the golden calf. Of course, there is such a thing as a christian man entering into business, and being a distinct success there, and all to the glory of God. But there is also such a thing as being swallowed up by materialism. It takes a steady hand to carry the full cup. You hear a business man talking of how much he has made on this investment and that, but one does not hear a single word about the Lord. A man may be a distinct success in business, but he is not seeking the glory of God. May God make us successful professional and business men, but let it all be to the glory of God. But let our success be expressed in godly living day by day. " I beseech Thee show me Thy glory." Moses came down from the mount, and saw the people gathered round the golden calf. What was the remedy for such a situation as that ? By God's deliverance they had been brought out of bondage, and here they were dancing round the golden calf. How far away they had strayed from God ! What is the remedy ? Shall Moses introduce a new set of rules and regulations in the camp ? No. " I beseech Thee show me Thy glory." The sovereign need of the church is a fresh revelation of the glory of God. We do not see the glory of God down here on the level of the camp. We need to be shut up with God in the heavenly places. There is a place by God's side, and in His presence, where we learn spiritual realities. And if we do not enter into that place of communion with Him, we will not see God's glory. There must be that drawing aside away from the things of the world, and being shut in with God.

In the thirty-third chapter of Exodus we read that the Lord's hand was placed upon Moses, and when His hand was withdrawn, Moses saw the retreating form of God. He saw Jehovah's back parts. But the revelation was wonderful in its effect. When Moses came down from the mount he was a transfigured man. That revelation had transfigured him, so that his face shone : and it had the effect of restoring the people to God. And we read in the thirty-fifth chapter that for the building of the tabernacle the people "brought jewels of gold : and every man that offered brought an offering of gold unto the Lord". The glory of the Lord crowned the whole thing. God's tabernacle set up in the midst of the people, and His glory manifested, all because one man had captured the vision, and had brought the people into touch with God.

That is the way of recovery. Perhaps God has a message for us in 2 Cor. 3: 9 and 17. "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Now Moses had a ministry committed to him. He had been on the mountain-top with the Lord : he had seen wonderful things there : a ministry had been committed to him. And it looked as if the whole situation was overthrown, in the light of what he saw happening in the valley below, with the people dancing round the golden calf. "How can I reveal to these people the order of God as seen in connection with those things revealed to me on the mount? The glory of God must rest upon these people." I am glad that Moses did not throw up his hands in dismay : I am glad he did not walk out of the situation. He took what was a wholly logical course. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," says Paul. What are we going to do about it? There is only one thing to do, and that is to fulfil the ministry that God has committed to us. We must recall God's people to higher and greater things. What the churches need in their leaders to-day are men who know God, and who can bring to the people the ministry of God. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4: 3, 4). What a transforming effect the

revelation of God's glory had on Moses! "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." "God hath shined in our hearts." If we have lost the vision, there is a way of recovery. The late Alfred Mace, of America, used to preach from Heb. 1. "God Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son." He would say: "Brethren, He gave it long ago, here a little, and there a little. But it is all now to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ." God has kept back nothing. God says to you and me: "There is a place by Me. I want to disclose something to you, something far beyond what I disclosed to Moses, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." A greater change still would be made in our day and generation if only we could get that vision. When Moses came down from the mount, the glory that he had seen there was reflected in his life below. And if we, too, reflect the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, those around us will be drawn to Him. Let us "bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus". If those marks of the Lord Jesus are not present with us, there is not much of the glory of God to be seen in our lives, neither is the Son of man glorified. How is He being glorified in your life and mine? Is "the life also of Jesus being made manifest in our mortal bodies"? "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." Do you want to see life in our churches? Then death must work in us, if life is to be manifested in the assembly, for His glory, and for the blessing of the churches which we represent here. "May the Lord bless thee, and keep thee, and make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee, and may He lift up the light of His countenance upon thee."

THE CHAIRMAN: The Lord has, indeed, been amongst us. Let us close with the singing of the Doxology. "Oh, Lord, we adore Thee."