

Alfred John  
**GARDINER**

V08 The Substantiality of  
Christianity



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Produced from GoodTeaching.org  
on 24-Feb-2026

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (1)

*1 John 1: 1 - 10; 1 John 2: 1 - 6*

**AJG** I was thinking that this epistle stresses the great substantiality of Christianity, that it is a real and substantial thing, marked by life, so that it speaks of "the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us" and the epistle is written, as we know from the last chapter, that we might know that we have eternal life. What I think we shall find, as we proceed, is that the life that is known and enjoyed among the saints takes character from what God is in His nature, so that we are constantly challenged as we go through this epistle. Remarks occur in the epistle from time to time that are intended to 'pull us up', so to speak, and make us examine whether we are really in things or not, the Spirit of God insisting on the reality and substance of what we have come into, and that it is entirely of God. Another thing that the epistle is marked by, as is well known, is the way that the writer says "he" and "him" without specifying, in so many words, whether he is referring to Christ or to God. We are thus constantly impressed, in this epistle, with God, but God as known in Christ, and I think the fact that we are to arrive at the knowledge of God links on with eternal conditions, the epistle bringing in, for instance, the thought that we are abiding in God and God in us. I trust, therefore, that as we proceed we shall be helped to face the truth as to how far we are in the power of Christianity, and helped too in our knowledge of God and our entrance into what is eternal in character. That is what one has in mind in suggesting the epistle.

**PHH** When you used the word 'substance' and 'substantiality' are you referring, first of all, to the way the epistle opens, that which was heard and seen, contemplated, handled?

**AJG** Yes, the apostle refers to the life which had been before their eyes in the Person of Jesus, not as something that was theoretical or merely doctrinal, but something which they had seen and handled and contemplated. It was something very substantial, and we can see that John in his ministry leads up, in Revelation 21, to something extremely substantial formed in the saints. One refers, of course, to the city, where the dimensions of it are given - "twelve thousand stadia: the length and the breadth and height" suggesting a cube of immense measurement, but immense content, immense substance, and that is what the Spirit of God is labouring to produce.

**JAP** Is this a reference to Christ in His flesh and blood condition, or does it refer to Him in resurrection as He moved in and out among the disciples during the forty days?

**AJG** I think it includes both. It was what they apprehended in Christ in His movements amongst them, before He died, and what they saw in Him during the forty days.

**ABP** The footnote refers to Luke 24.

**AJG** Yes, because there we get a specific example of that which was handled.

**WC** Does not that scripture link up the two periods? The Lord says "I myself," it was the same One they had known in blood and flesh that they could then handle as risen?

**AJG** I think that helps. Of course, in taking account of the Lord in flesh and blood condition, before His death, other things were seen as well as eternal life; that is, we see the Lord in the position of testimony and conflict, but when He was risen from the dead, that is past and is no longer seen, and we can contemplate Him moving wholly in relation to that eternal life. At the same time, we might reverently say that what He was in testimony found its roots and its power in what He was with His Father, which is really the essence of this eternal life.

**PHH** Hence such an expression as in Luke 21, "By day he was teaching in the temple, and by night, going out he remained abroad on the mountain called the mount of Olives." Would that link on illustratively with what you are saying?

**AJG** That gives the double side of the life of Christ down here before death. There was the testimony and conflict side, but then there was the secret side, and that is what is connected with this eternal life.

**PHH** I was thinking of what you said about His secret life with the Father. Would that be hinted at as we are taught by the Spirit in relation to the mount of Olives?

**AJG** I thought so.

**HDT** Would that not be in mind when John says, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father"? (John 1: 14).

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**HDT** He does not dwell so much on the Word, but the glory that shone in the relationship that was there.

**AJG** Quite so, I suppose what they contemplated as recorded in the gospel is very much the way God was coming out in Him, whereas, what they contemplated as referred to in this epistle was very much the answer to that in a Man.

**JMcD** Is the reference in chapter 3 to "see him as he is" additional to what is presented in these verses?

**AJG** Oh! yes, certainly, "As he is," of course, takes us on to His present position and condition in glory.

**FCH** Would the passage in Acts 10 bear upon it? "This man God raised up the third day and gave him to be openly seen, not of all the people, but of witnesses who were chosen before of God," Acts 10: 40, 41.

**AJG** That is so, but that was definitely with a view to testimony being rendered to His resurrection.

**FCH** Does that scripture in Acts 10 include what was referred to earlier in connection with the forty days?

**AJG** Oh! it does undoubtedly. It was then that He was seen by the witnesses, but it was given with a view to their witnessing to the fact that God had raised Him from the dead, and in a way, one would suggest, that was all that was in view in that scripture; but this scripture is rather that the features of eternal life, as seen in Christ, were taken account of by the twelve, so that they could bear witness of it to ourselves.

**PL** Do you think the fact that the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are linked on with the twelve foundations in Revelation 21: 14, suggests the impregnable foundation on which all was inaugurated in a trustworthy company of chosen persons - "the men whom thou gavest me"?

**AJG** I think so. I think it helps to take account of the peculiarly privileged position that the twelve were in as accompanying with the Lord, so that in John 17, for instance, we find the Lord saying to His Father - "the words which thou hast given me," that is the divine communications, "I have given them, and they have received them," John 17: 8. The communications from His Father, which the Lord was constantly receiving, He communicated to the twelve, drawing them into this wonderful fellowship, the fellowship with the Father and with His Son. They were constantly imbibing the Father's thoughts as communicated to the Son and as passed on by the Son to the twelve.

**EJH** And in the beginning of the Acts the one who was to take the place of Judas had to be equal in witness to that which the eleven had known.

**AJG** Yes, he had to be one who had assembled with them all the time the Lord Jesus came in and went out among them, beginning from the baptism of John to the day when He was taken up; so that, as you say, he had to be one who had the same experiences as the twelve.

**HDT** Does not the expression "until the day in which he was taken up" show that the forty days of the Lord's coming in and out were necessary for their education to be completed?

**AJG** Yes, it does.

**PHH** How do you regard the Lord's Person in all this? Clearly, as I understand, the life which you are now speaking of refers to Him as Man, the seeing and contemplating and handling would refer to Him as Man, but behind all that there lies the glory of His Person. Would you just say a little about that, that His Person in a way affects all this?

**AJG** I think His Person gives character to the life; it was a life lived in constant communion with His Father, but we are brought into it through the testimony of the apostles and by the Holy Spirit.

**JMcK** Does the idea of being "manifested to us" involve the completeness of what was manifested? It is not simply what was presented in testimony and might, or might not, have been received, but does the suggestion "has been manifested to us" involve a kind of adequacy and completeness?

**AJG** I would think so. God presented things in their completeness and wholeness at the very beginning, and what John is combating, in his first epistle, is certain suggestions that there was to be a development in Christianity over and above what came out at the beginning. He is countering that by setting out the complete thought that was in the mind of God, as set out perfectly in Christ to start with, and then everything taking character from that which was from the beginning.

**EJH** And there is no lower standard than that for anybody?

**AJG** No. So that when God brought in man in His creation, He set out the full thought that was in His mind, in the sense that Adam was never a child. Everyone else that came on the scene afterwards had to grow up to that, but the full thought was set out in Adam. So it is now with Christ; the full thought of what is to characterise Christianity, the life that is to mark it, is set out in Jesus and now we are to take character from it.

**GAL** Is the life that was in Christ in that way referred to by Him in John 10: 38 where He says, "that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him"?

**AJG** Well, that would underlie it; that passage, I suppose, is a question of the truth of His Person.

**AH** Would you think the substance that appears in this remarkable word of John was gathered up from an occasion amongst others, like chapter 13, where he leant on the bosom of Jesus?

**AJG** I would think so, and what an impression of God John must have got, when Jesus washed his feet and the feet of all the disciples. He had in his soul the light of the glory of Christ and he would constantly say to himself, 'that is what God is capable of, a love of that character that will stoop so low and wash the feet of disciples.' So that in the coming day God is going to wipe away every tear from every eye, that is what God is capable of; and I believe John on that occasion would get an impression of that from the fact that Jesus stooped and washed his feet and wiped them Himself.

**GRC** Is there any link between this and Paul's expression in Ephesians "the life of God"?

**AJG** I think there is. I have thought of that; will you say something more?

**GRC** I wondered whether that bore on what was being said as to the Lord's Person. The Person here was no less than God, so that what was manifested in Him was a substantial expression of the divine nature in a man.

**AJG** Yes, and a perfect answer, in a man too, to all that God was as set out in Himself, so that both sides are in Him, do you not think? "He is the true God," it says at the end of this epistle, "and eternal life."

**GRC** And have you in mind that what came out in Him, in that way, is to give character to what the city is, the cube you spoke of? Is it the formation in the saints of these features?

**AJG** Exactly. It is God coming out first in Christ and then in a vessel which is His fulness.

**WHK** Would it be diverting you to ask why, in the beginning of Acts during the forty days when the Lord shows Himself living, He speaks of the things concerning the kingdom of God?

**AJG** I think that is important because that is what we need. He assembled with them in order to convey to them impressions of the assembly, but He spoke to them the things concerning the kingdom of God; that is the bringing us into subjection to God by the Spirit, so that room is made for the substantial work of the Spirit in us, because after all Christianity is nothing if it is not substantial.

**JSE** May I ask if we have to approach the truth of the Person of Christ by way of the substantiality of His place as Man? I thought the term, "That which was

from the beginning" is unquestionably a reference to His coming into manhood, and in chapter 5, "He is the true God and eternal life" is unquestionably an allusion to His Person. And are there developed touches, as we proceed in chapters 1 and 2, up to chapter 3, to show how immediately we are dependent on what was the portion of the twelve? We are thus brought into the gain of that, and the "we" in chapter 3, "Beloved, now are we children of God," is inclusive rather than exclusive to the twelve.

**AJG** Yes, quite so. It is important to distinguish in that way in this epistle. Sometimes when the apostle says "we" or "us" or "our" he is referring to the apostles, as, for instance, here, "our fellowship is indeed with the Father," and then again in chapter 4: 6, "*We* are of God; he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us." That is clearly apostolic; but then the verse you quoted from chapter 3, "now are we children of God," is general, embracing all believers; and so in chapter 5, verse 19, "We know that we are of God," that would refer to all believers, all the children of God. We thus have to distinguish through the epistle as to when he is referring to what was exclusively apostolic, and when he is referring to the children of God as a whole.

**PL** Is there in the two thoughts that blend of authority and mutuality, so essential to the continuation of things here?

**AJG** That helps, I am sure. Authority in what is apostolic, but mutuality in what belongs to all the brethren.

**ABP** May we be inclined to think of the twelve as rather slow to move in relation to the heavenly side of things which came out under Paul, and does this balance our thoughts in that to see the distinctive place they had in the foundation of Christianity?

**AJG** I am sure that is important; so that was there not great substance with them? One has felt how, as we read this chapter, we are impressed with the fact that while we are being introduced to the thought of eternal life in its blessedness, yet immediately in verse 5 the apostle brings in the side of what is moral, "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." One has been impressed with the thought that Peter got a sense of that in John 6, when he says, "to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal." That shows that he valued the eternal life, but then he goes on to say, "we have believed and known that *thou* art the holy one of God." He immediately shows that in connection with the thought of eternal life there must be the conditions that are suitable to what God is as light, and that was perfectly seen in Jesus, "we have believed and known that *thou* art the holy one of God."

**ABP** Does that expression involve our going into the presence of God?

**AJG** I am sure it does.

**RJW** Would you say a little more about verse 2, being in a parenthesis, speaking of life and then eternal life?

**AJG** It was the word of life that the apostle speaks of; that is to say, the intelligible expression of life, according to God's thought of what life is. It was intelligibly expressed and conveyed to them in Christ, but then he goes on to say that what he has specially in mind is the eternal life. Life is a wider thought than eternal life; so that we get in Romans 8, the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. That, in a way, is power to move in every position in which we are, including our position in responsibility and testimony, but eternal life is more limited and is connected with living in relation to the Father and His world.

**GCS** Does that involve the saints dwelling together in unity?

**AJG** Well, those are the conditions in which it is enjoyed.

**GRC** Do you regard the expression, "the eternal life, which was with the Father" as in some ways peculiar to the Son? When it is extended to us would we have to link the Son and the Spirit with the matter?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. I think it was, in a sense, initially set out as unique to Christ, on account of who He is in His Person, but then it says later on, "God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." That involves that we come into it by the Spirit.

**HDT** The Spirit's witness is mentioned in that very connection, in chapter 5.

**AJG** Yes, indeed. So that it is a very wonderful thing that we have been brought into, the life that is really ours. If you think of Jesus and what He would speak of to the disciples. Peter says, "thou hast words of life eternal." Well, what would the Lord be speaking about in them? He would be speaking about the Father and the Father's world, and all that in which God found His life (speaking reverently) and in which Christ found His life as Man with Him.

**PHH** Is that hinted at in the use of this word 'fellowship' in verse 3, 'that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ'? Was there a peculiar nearness in the apostles, the twelve, to the Son, so that the impress of these wonderful things came first-hand to them, but the report is to bring us into it?

**AJG** That is how I understand it, I think that verse in John 17 is a most impressive verse. The Lord says to the Father "the words," that is 'divine

communications,' "which thou hast given me I have given them." Think of all that the Father communicated to Christ as Man here, and the Lord passing it on to the twelve, and now it seems to me that really is the basis of this epistle.

**HDT** And do you get in John 15 a moral basis for that? "I call you no longer bondmen, for the bondman does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you." Was there capability to receive what was given to them on that basis?

**AJG** Yes, I would say that.

**PHH** But, if we may follow up what you were saying, this life is only made known to us in power and in conditions by the Spirit, and that immediately brings in the moral element. Is that right?

**AJG** It does, indeed, and that is so important. The Spirit has indited for us the gospels and the various epistles, especially this epistle, so that we might have the capacity to enter, in the Spirit, into that which the apostles enjoyed before the gospels and epistles were written.

**ABP** Does that link again with John 6: 63, "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing - the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

**AJG** Yes, it does, and I think it is most important for us to notice that immediately this is introduced the moral element is introduced "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." That is to be characteristic of the life, and in the passage referred to in John 15, the Lord shows that He (speaking reverently) was governed by the moral element; He says He abode in the Father's love on the ground that He kept His Father's commandments.

**FCH** Why is this put in the form of a message here in verse 5, and again later in the epistle?

**AJG** I think it is to emphasise the importance of it. It is not just an item of truth, but a specific message, which the Lord gave to John to communicate, and he brings it in at the very outset as though it is a matter of supreme importance that we should understand "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." That must govern us in our movements with one another in this fellowship.

**PL** Does the idea of a message bring out the immensity and vitality of having a word straight from Christ, in contrast to the speculations that were floating

around?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. A word direct from Christ to enforce this matter.

**PL** One is thinking of Mary of Magdala in John 20; she is a messenger there too, in another setting.

**AJG** Quite so.

**PL** Is a message what is specific, concise and final?

**AJG** Exactly. We can see the importance of this, because, if we refer again to the heavenly city, the transparency of it is stressed; it says "as a crystal-like jasper stone" and then the first foundation is jasper and so on.

**PL** So that when the moral issue is raised by the Lord with the woman of John 4, after He has enlarged on divine giving, is she not secured testimonially in transparency in her utterance to the men of the city - "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done"? Will not the city, as the product of what is moral, be a great transparent vessel of shedding divine glory over the universe?

**AJG** I think that is important. Our first introduction to the city, in its millennial character, is that it comes down "out of heaven from God, having the glory of God," that shows its substantiality, that it is really formed in love. But then it immediately goes on to say, "Her shining was like ... a crystal-like jasper stone" (Revelation 21: 11), emphasising this feature of transparency.

**EJH** In Luke's gospel the Lord speaks of the single eye and the whole body being light, having no part dark. Would you link that with this too?

**AJG** Yes, I would.

**EJH** There are dark parts with us all, even though they may be small and perhaps unrecognised, but the thought is that there should be no part dark?

**AJG** That brings us again, as so much does, to the great value of the abiding presence with us of the Holy Spirit, who is God. He has access to the inmost recesses of our minds and hearts, and so it says that God will have truth in the inward parts. That is a most important thing for us to remind ourselves of constantly.

**ECM** The Lord says in John 3: 21, "he that practises the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God."

**AJG** That is another striking passage, and one has thought of it. It is a remarkable expression, "his works ... have been *wrought in God*." It links with this epistle and shows how much the intention is that we should have God

livingly before us, so that all our movements can be said to be "wrought in God"; they are in the full light of what God is as known to us.

**WSS** I was thinking, when you were speaking of the city, of the street which is said to be of "pure gold, as transparent glass," that if we are to be in the enjoyment of this fellowship we must be walking in that street.

**AJG** I am sure that is right.

**GRC** So that this line, which you are speaking of, would be the way in which we reach fulness of joy according to verse 4?

**AJG** That is another encouraging thing, that fulness of joy is in mind for us all; the Lord could speak of "my joy."

**HDT** It is remarkable that John should state his object before he enlarges upon such a searching line of things.

**AJG** Exactly, you mean that that would encourage us to face all that is searching?

**HDT** Yes, quite so.

**WC** May we infer that this message came from the breast and the bosom of Jesus, in that way? I was thinking of John's position according to chapter 13 of his gospel and wondering whether the thought of light and love is not very definitely there, the bosom stressing the love, and the breast suggesting the breast-plate of the high priest, bringing these moral exercises?

**AJG** I think that is very likely. It is striking that just following on that Judas goes out, as though there is power in the light and love to exclude a foreign element.

**GRC** Would you mind saying something as to the thought of light? It says here, "God is light" and lower down, "He is in the light," but Paul tells us that He dwells in light unapproachable?

**AJG** He is light, so that it says in Ephesians 5: 13 "that which makes everything manifest is light," so that God causes what He is in Himself, you might say, not, of course, what we cannot know, but what He is to shine upon everything; everything is thus made manifest in its true character by God shining upon it.

**WH** "In thy light shall we see light."

**AJG** I suppose it came out fully at the cross, because there evil was exposed and fully judged consistently with God's nature, but love shone out as rising above it all.

**GP** In Acts 5 the apostles are charged by the angel to go and speak in the temple to the people "all the words of this life"; does the fact that that chapter begins with the facing of moral issues confirm what you are saying?

**AJG** That is very interesting; one has often thought of that expression "all the words of this life." It was something that could be seen in Jerusalem among the saints there, but as you say, the angel would tell the apostles to call attention to it after moral questions had been faced. It was clear, therefore, that the saints were really walking in the light, as God was in the light.

**JAP** What is the thought of "the blood" here?

**AJG** We are coming to that shortly. It is that by means of which we are able to continue in fellowship with one another, notwithstanding what our flesh is. But we are just seeking now to get a little further help on the question of light, first God being light and then His being "in the light."

**HFR** Does His being "in the light" involve the declaration of John 1: 18?

**AJG** I believe it is a very important matter and involves the full light that has come to us. If we are to walk in the light, as God is in the light, first of all we have got to face the fact that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If we face that then we are in liberty, it seems to me, to walk in the light, and that is the full light in which God is known. All that is involved in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is what we should now be walking in and having fellowship in together, because that is the light in which God is now known.

**ABP** There is only one street in the city, is there not?

**AJG** Quite so.

**PHH** Would that shed any light on the early chapters of Genesis, where God called for light first of all, and then named it, and then operated in it?

**AJG** I think Mr. Taylor has remarked that it is a principle of God's ways that He works in the light,

so that the first thing is that He commands light, and then, as you say, He operates. Had you that in mind?

**PHH** Yes, as being different from God dwelling in "unapproachable light." We can never know anything about that, I suppose, but there is that which God has called for and in which He operates, and would it be right to say that the whole of the revelation really is involved in that?

**AJG** I think so.

**GRC** Do you think the fact that we are told that God dwells in "unapproachable light" is to stress the idea of light, though we cannot approach that light? He speaks in the Old Testament, as far as men were concerned, of dwelling in "thick darkness," but in His essential Being He dwells in "unapproachable light"?

**AJG** Yes, quite so, I think that is important, so that darkness is not connected with the thought of God at all.

**HDT** This has the effect upon us in view, has it not, and is the way to come into the thing to be affected by it morally? It says in Psalm 97: 11, "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart"?

**AJG** Exactly.

**APCL** If we understand that God is light, does not that become attractive to us, because light will bring us into contact with God Himself?

**AJG** Quite so.

**APCL** Do you not think there is a tendency with us rather to fear light and coming into the light, whereas, God being light and not only "*in the light*" stresses what He is Himself - perfect goodness, does it not?

**AJG** Exactly, but, of course, the natural heart of man does not understand that, and hence the grace of the way in which God has approached men in Christ. The woman in John 4 proved it, that there was a Man sitting with her and speaking to her of the most wonderful things in order to attract her, and then we see there is movement on her part in response. Then He brings the light to bear upon her, but in such a way as not to discourage her.

**APCL** Quite so. But is not that where we so often fail in the presentation of light, not knowing what God is. He is light?

**AJG** Quite so.

**EJH** Would you say that light exposed her, but grace retained her?

**AJG** Yes, we could indeed say that, and then in the process of retention, so to speak, she would learn that the very light that exposed her also brought in what would meet her need, both were there in the Person of Christ.

**JH** Light comes to us and not we to the light exactly?

**AJG** No; but it comes to us in order that we may come to the light. We get the verse in John 3, that has already been quoted, "he that practises the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God."

**WSS** Have we not been very blessedly learning latterly something of what it is to walk, perhaps in a fuller way, in the light of the revelation of God known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

**AJG** That is exactly what I thought. If we read that "God is in the light" and then we are to walk "in the light," that immediately raises the question with us, 'What is the light in which God is?' That is now all that is involved in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and we are to see that we are all walking in it, so that we have fellowship with one another.

**WSS** And are we not finding practically that the result of this wonderful help we have had is opening up the truth of the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one way and another all through the Scriptures?

**AJG** Yes.

**WC** Is not the light the light of love?

**AJG** It is, because God is love.

**WC** I think Mr. Raven said 'the light was relative, but the love was absolute.' May I ask what connection has grace and truth with this light according to John 1?

**AJG** I suppose grace and truth are the light adapting itself to man in his condition of need. Obviously grace is needed, but not grace at the expense of truth; so we have there the wonderful combination of grace and truth.

**PL** Would it be right to say that the light of the Trinity, in the way you have spoken, is to give body to the fellowship, as also preservation to us in it?

**AJG** I think so. It brings the light of love, as has been said, and yet love in absolute holiness.

**ASM** It says in Psalm 43: 3, "Send out thy light and thy truth - *they* shall lead me, *they* shall bring me to thy holy mount, and unto thy habitations."

**AJG** That is good. The light and truth as received by us bring us to God; they have that in mind and they lead us to God and His holy habitation.

**TJG** Is the thought of substantiality seen in the expression "sons of light," "children of light" and "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth"?

**AJG** Yes, I suppose so, "sons of light" are those fully developed by the light.

**ABP** You have referred to John 4 several times, do we have the matter worked out in remarkable fulness there, because the Father and the Son and the Spirit are referred to in the Economy and then do you think all is summed up (if we

may use that expression) in the statement "God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth"?

**AJG** Yes, that is very interesting and the "must" is important. In having to do with God, God being God, there is a certain "must" that has to enter into our relations with God; our relations with God must be in keeping with what He is.

**PHH** Is there a certain magnifying of that light in John 14, where the three Persons of the Godhead are brought before us objectively, each one to be taken account of and approached? Is that light given perhaps in a more private way, affording help in this great matter?

**AJG** I think it does, and it leads up to the Lord saying, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." So that you have the Father and the Son coming; the Spirit is already there, because that comes in the section in which the Lord has spoken of the abiding presence of the Spirit with us. We thus have the whole Godhead there arriving at tabernacle conditions, dwelling happily with one who is marked by keeping Christ's word. And we come to that in this passage at the beginning of chapter 2, "whoever keeps his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected."

**PHH** I would like to ask, if it is not going astray from the line, for a little word about the sonship of Christ. It says in the end of verse 3, "our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Do you draw a distinction between "his Son," that is the Son of God or the Son of the Father, and the term "the Son" as used in Scripture?

**AJG** There is no doubt a distinction, but not, in a sense, too hard and fast. We get, for instance, in chapter 5: 12, "He that has the Son has life - he that has not the Son of God has not life." I think the expression "the Son" is used to convey the personal dignity of Christ, whereas "the Son of God" views Him in that relationship with God. He is the standard of manhood according to God, so that we are to arrive at "the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God."

**PHH** Yes, I think that distinction helps, because we are, as you have just quoted, to arrive at "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God," which is evidently, therefore, something available to us. On the other hand we have the statement, "No one knows the Son," and again later, "as to the Son, thy throne, O God." Would it help at all to take account of the distinctiveness which goes with the title "the Son"?

**AJG** It does, and yet, of course, those scriptures are speaking of the Son as in manhood; the scripture "no one know the Son but the Father" indicates that

He is in His Person God, and as such is unknowable to us; we only know Him in His manhood.

**EJH** Has it been said, by Mr. Raven, that "the Son" is the highest and greatest title of the Lord?

**AJG** I could not say whether he has said that, but it is true, I think.

**GRC** Would you say that there is no thought in Scripture of others being associated with Him under the title of "the Son," but there is with the title "the Son of God"?

**AJG** Yes.

**WC** Is not "the Son" the line of the revelation of God, and "his Son" more the response to that, including making room for others to be with Him?

**AJG** So that we have received the Spirit of His Son, God having sent out the Spirit of His Son in our hearts. The response thus from the saints should be adequate to satisfy the heart of God.

**GCS** What is the difference between this fellowship and the fellowship in 1 Corinthians 1: 9, "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"?

**AJG** That is more in a public and testimonial position and refers very much to the position of the tribes in the wilderness round the tabernacle. They were all committed to that one common interest, and it is dignified for us by its being called "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." But this is fellowship in connection with the inward privileges of the saints, and connects more perhaps with the unity of the Spirit as we have in Ephesians 4, "There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling." This fellowship would link with that, whereas "the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord," would link more with "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," Ephesians 4: 4, 5.

**AM** May I ask for help as to the perception of light? I was thinking of man as having a conscience and as to how light gains entrance to him. Is that to be in our minds as to the moral side that is always raised when it is a question of light?

**AJG** I think that is right, only we have to bear in mind the great subject of being born anew, "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3: 3. That involves what you speak of as perception, does it not?

**AM** Quite so.

**AJG** So that we have to carry in our minds that apart from the sovereign operation of the Spirit we cannot see things. At the same time, there is the

responsibility to see light when it is presented, and so it says in John 3: 19, "this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil,"

**JMcD** Would you distinguish between the different aspects of fellowship here? There is the apostles' fellowship "with the Father, and with his Son," our fellowship with them, as it says, "that ye also may have fellowship with us" and then we have "fellowship with one another."

**AJG** Yes, but there is not such a lot of difference between them, except that the apostles had a distinctive place in the inauguration of Christianity, so that the early believers "persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles," Acts 2: 42. That, of course, is what we come into too, in due time; we have the apostles' fellowship in the divinely-given record in the gospels and the epistles, and as moving together in these things, in the Holy Spirit, we have fellowship with one another.

**APCL** Is there the suggestion of having fellowship with God in verse 6?

**AJG** Quite so. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness ..." The fellowship in which we walk does involve in that way having fellowship with God, and I believe what was remarked earlier is right, that it really leads to having part in what Ephesians calls "the life of God."

**WWM** The Lord says in John 12: 36, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light." Do we have to believe in it to come into it?

**AJG** Yes. So that John's gospel was written so that disciples might become believers, as Mr. Taylor has said.

**CH** Is it appropriate to ask for the answer to the question about the blood? Does it not come in in connection with this fellowship?

**AJG** Yes, it is a very important matter. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin," verse 7. That is as moving together in these holy things we are constantly conscious of our need of living faith in the blood, you might say, the value and import of the blood.

**CH** So that whilst the light is attractive, as has been said, it also makes manifest; but then the divine provision is there for what it does make manifest?

**AJG** Exactly.

**PL** The efficacy of the blood, is it?

**AJG** The efficacy of it.

**FCH** Is the thought that the fellowship is maintained on its proper level?

**AJG** Quite so. So that there is no need to surrender the divine standard, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." That standard must be maintained amongst us, but then we have power to do it, and we can go on happily together, having fellowship with God and fellowship with one another, because the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

**GRC** Would you say why John, as a writer, stresses the blood so much; he is the only one who refers to it at the crucifixion?

**AJG** It may be because he has in mind that the saints should be in the truth livingly. What do you think yourself?

**GRC** I was thinking of what you have been saying as to God, the greatness of God, and God being light. John is writing from the highest level but he brings in the blood in a remarkable way.

**AJG** Quite so. Well, the blood testifies to the complete ending in death of the man that is offensive to God. At the same time, it brings out the exceeding preciousness to God of the sacrifice of Christ. God has been fully vindicated in regard of sin and He has been fully expressed in His nature of love. All that was possible only by the devoted sacrifice of Christ, and the blood speaks to God of the exceeding preciousness of that sacrifice, as well as testifying to the fact that the man who was offensive has been ended in death.

**AMcG** Referring back to what was said earlier about light and love, is it not essential to remember that both love and light are God's nature. Mr. Darby stressed that, did he not?

**AJG** Yes. God is light and He is love, but then He comes into the light in order that men may know what He is and be fully and happily in it. That is the remarkable thing, that notwithstanding our past history, and the fact that we have the flesh with us, it is possible for us to be happily in the full light of God.

**APB** Is there a particular importance in bringing in the blood in view of the additions and doctrines that are current in the world? These are attached to the thought of Christianity, but make nothing of the blood, and I wondered if that was the kind of thing that John had to bring in something to correct?

**AJG** I think that is important. We shall come to that in chapter 5, where it says, "This is he that came by water and blood ... not by water only, but by water and blood," as though to say the Lord did not come to reform man in the flesh; the water only might possibly suggest the cleansing of the man, but

what He came to do was to secure him for God by removing the man that was offensive, so that it is by water and blood, the blood testifying to the fact that death had to be brought in.

**WC** Does verse 9 refer to the water, the cleansing, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?

**AJG** I think so.

**GRC** Could this be an elevated view of the blood, because it is "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son"?

**AJG** Quite so; it links with the scripture in Acts 20: 28 that God has purchased the assembly "with the blood of his own." I believe we perhaps tend to think so much of the efficacy of the blood as meeting our side of things, that we do not realise the exceeding preciousness, in the sight of God, of the life that was laid down, and of the laying down of that life, and that is what the blood speaks of.

**GRC** So in Ephesians 1 Paul speaks of the blood of the Beloved. He says, "in whom we have redemption"; it is in the Beloved.

**AJG** Yes. Redemption through *His* blood.

**PHH** Does that bring in any thought of the immense sacrifice in love that God has made? I was thinking of that verse in Acts 20: 28, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own."

**AJG** Quite so.

**JSE** Does the present tense of the verb bring into relief the peculiar value of "the family" in its stainlessness for God's pleasure?

**AJG** I think it does. Do you not think it should be very affecting to us that God has in mind that we should always be walking "in the light," clear of every defilement? There is no need that defilement should remain upon our consciences or spirits because "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son" is always available for us to appropriate fully.

**WC** Is not the practical side of that the "confessing"?

**AJG** That is a very important matter.

**WC** I think we need help as to that, when matters are settled with God, you might say, in a secret way, but the confession of sins and cleansing is in relation to unrighteousness, is it not? I was wondering whether we might get

help on that assembly-wise as to meeting matters that are acknowledged but not confessed in assembly?

**AJG** Well, if an assembly fails it should confess its failure, as an assembly. The expression "if we confess our sins" is not our sins in a general way, but it is naming them before God, would you not think so?

**WC** Yes; I was thinking of the teaching in Leviticus and the bringing of the offering before the tent of meeting before Jehovah.

**AJG** Quite so.

**TJG** Are we then to understand that this confessing is not only to God, but if needed to men or in the midst of the assembly?

**AJG** Well, if needed. Scripture makes provision for all that. But I think it is important that in confessing, the thing is named; it is not a general thing, but the thing is named.

**CH** Here it is particularly before God, do you think, because of the cleansing? No action of the assembly could actually cleanse, could it?

**AJG** No, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

**AWGT** You made a distinction between "admission" and "confession." I wonder if it would help the brethren if you said something as to that?

**AJG** Well, if the particular sin is confessed before God, the true nature of it is named, that is all I had in mind, that we should be specific.

**JD** Is the confession of our sins in the light of the blood of Jesus Christ the moral basis on which the fellowship is enjoyed?

**AJG** I am sure it is, and it is most important that it should be continually maintained by us. But then, on the other hand, the apostle goes on to say "these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin." The very fact that there is such perfect provision for us is not to make us careless in regard of sinning. He writes these things in order that we may not sin, but then that brings in, at once, the other side, that if anyone sin (there is the recognition that it may happen) "we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins" - a most touching reference.

**ABP** Does all this hinge on walking in the light as He is in the light? What does that mean, "as he is in the light"?

**AJG** I think it means that all our walk is governed by the light in which God is known to us, do you not think so?

**ABP** Does it mean that what the Spirit has brought before us in the way of disclosures of the truth would be the light in which He is?

**AJG** Yes, it does.

**Ques** And would that provide fellowship of a substantial character?

**AJG** Fellowship of a substantial character that is governed by the light in which God is known. Every fresh recovery of truth to us ought, therefore, to have its effect upon our relations with one another and our service God-ward.

**ABP** And does the detail that is given in relation to the moral side of things show that the light will constantly bring to light in us things which need to be judged and dealt with, so that we are constantly moving into fresh appreciation of the light?

**AJG** I am sure of that, and constant appreciation of Christ as the One in whom there is the perfect answer in manhood to all that God is. He is the standard to which we are to grow up, and, at the same time, He is the One in whom we are to abide; it says that he that abides in Him does not sin.

**PHH** Do you take it that the expression, "in the light as he is in the light" refers to the revelation of God as a basic matter, or would you extend it as well into what may come to us by way of ministry and detail?

**AJG** I think what comes to us in the way of ministry and detail is just the opening up in detail of the way in which God has come out.

**PHH** Would it, therefore, perhaps sharpen our consciences and make it a more sensitive matter with us all the time?

**AJG** I think so.

**JSE** Is not that seen in the course of years, during the development of the truth amongst us, that certain things that we would not have connected in relation to the light years ago, we have to do so now, and we have to be more intense about them?

**AJG** I am sure that is right.

**PL** So that every ray of divine light works out in mutual affection for one another; as the light is the more enjoyed the saints are the more loved?

**AJG** I think so, and that promotes care for one another too, so that later on in this epistle we read of one seeing his brother sin; he is not careless about it, but he immediately takes it up with God.

**WC** In 1 Corinthians, the moment Paul mentions the fellowship, he beseeches them to be of one mind and one opinion.

**AJG** There cannot be fellowship, in the full sense of it, if there is not one mind and one opinion.

**APCL** Do you think that John's reference in the beginning of chapter 2 to "my children" is on this line? In chapter 1 it is "we" - "these things write *we* to you" and "this is the message that *we* have heard."

**AJG** It is "my children," that is, it is John's children. He is addressing all the saints, whether in their stature they are fathers or young men or little children they are all, you might say, John's children, and he is addressing them in that affectionate way. It is clearly the spirit of the elder rather than the apostle.

**APCL** I wondered whether that might enter into ministry in these times?

**AJG** It might, but I suppose it requires a certain moral power to be able to speak like this.

**APCL** I wondered whether chapter 1 was not the setting out of the thing, which is unchallengeable and unquestionable, but now it is a matter of his own moral stature in writing in saying "my children" and "I write to you, children"?

**AJG** So that those to whom he wrote would understand that it was John writing, and all that John was, as one who was perhaps peculiarly formed in holy love, would enter into these exhortations, do you think?

**APCL** I thought that and, therefore, if that was so, there would not be so much questioning as to authority in the ministry.

**AJG** I do feel that this is one thing that perhaps this epistle may help us in, the importance of taking on substance and genuineness and reality, because then moral power in the ministry will follow.

**FCH** Is it not very appealing that it is the One whose blood cleanses us, who is our patron?

**AJG** Quite so, and He is always in the Father's presence in the value of His own Person and work. We have, it says, "a patron with the Father"; He is always there in that character, One who is upholding the interests of His own.

**PL** One whom the Father has and could deny nothing to?

**AJG** Quite so.

**GRC** Is His service as the patron in view of maintaining the fellowship here inviolate? It does not simply say the one who sins has a patron, but "we have a patron."

**AJG** Well, yes. This thought of the patron is a wonderful thing; He is there for all the saints, all the family of God. "We have a patron" - He is always there.

**PHH** Is the emphasis on the fact that He is with the Father?

**AJG** I think so.

**PHH** So that the position is maintained as has been said; it must go through.

**AJG** Quite so.

**HDT** There is an extension, of course, in the thought of propitiation, is there not?

**AJG** Yes. He is it; "He is the propitiation for our sins." That is, He is there personally in the value of all that He has accomplished.

**APCL** Is the suggestion "if any one sin" that it really brings in something that is foreign to this wonderful system?

**AJG** Quite so.

**APCL** Therefore, he is presenting one that is able to meet the situation perfectly?

**AJG** The patron, you might say, gives the answer to it immediately Himself.

**APCL** Do you think, therefore, there is the necessity for maintaining, in a certain sense, an objective ministry of Christ?

**AJG** I am sure that is important.

**WD** Why does John keep testing the position?

**AJG** Because he has in mind that things should go through in the power of life, and that they should not be corrupted. You cannot exactly corrupt life, as he has in mind that we should be concerned in these last days as to genuineness and the reality of what we profess and that we should be in it substantially.

**WD** He was specially fitted for this ministry.

**AJG** Yes, he was one who is regarded as going right through. The Lord said in regard of John, "if I will that he abide until I come," so what John stands for goes right through to the end, and that is why it is that his writings are so important for us now in these days.

**AH** Would he have seen this service of Christ in operation when the Lord said to Peter "I have prayed for thee"?

**AJG** Well, yes, quite so. Now the position is established, "we have a patron with the Father."

**CWO'LM** Would you say a little, please, as to "Jesus Christ the righteous"?

**AJG** It is stressing the moral side of things, that He is the righteous. We might have thought it would say, Jesus Christ His Son, stressing the relationship of affection, but it is rather stressing the moral side of things; "Jesus Christ the righteous; and *he* is the propitiation for our sins."

**GAL** In the effecting of the propitiation, He has glorified God entirely about the whole question of sin, has He not?

**AJG** He has. It is a most important matter always to keep that in mind.

**JSE** Is the word 'patron' not exactly connected with relationship itself, but with the management of the relationship which He looks after?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**GWB** Would you say another word as to the meaning of "propitiation" in this setting?

**AJG** Well, God's nature and His throne required that sin should be unsparingly judged, and Christ has met every requirement of the throne and every demand of God's nature by the sacrifice of Himself. The whole position is thus met fully and, in a sense, you might say, more than fully, because not only has the sacrifice of Christ met every demand of God's throne and every requirement of His nature, but the devotedness in which He did sacrifice Himself has, so to speak, covered the whole scene with fragrance. I think it is a very blessed thing to think of that fragrance, the fragrance of Christ; His devotedness fills the presence of God.

**HW** Is that why, in the last line of verse 2, the sins of the whole world are not mentioned, it is a propitiation for the whole world?

**AJG** Yes, I suppose it is because it is provisional. Mr. Raven used to say that it meant that the world was provisionally in reconciliation, and I suppose that position remains until they set up another man, antichrist.

**HW** So the whole position is covered by this wonderful act of propitiation?

**AJG** By the wonderful act and by His personal presence before God.

**AH** Is the propitiation always connected with sins and not sin?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (2)

*1 John 2: 3 - 29*

**AJG** We have a good deal in this chapter as to abiding in Christ, involving fixed conditions by which we are preserved, and where we commenced reading we have one of the many tests that the epistle provides, by which we are intended, as it were, to check up as to where we are and how far we are really governed by the truth. We cannot take the ground of knowing God, or knowing Christ, if in fact we are lawless and do not keep His commandments, so that the epistle is salutary in that way as insisting on reality. I think one can see, more and more, that the way that God meets the conditions which have come in through sin is by coming into those conditions Himself, first in the Person of Christ and then in the Person of the Spirit. Christ has come in and has overcome, passing through the world of evil in every way pleasing to God and setting forth in Himself what God is in His nature and His moral character, and then the Spirit has come in, redemption having been accomplished, in order to attach believers to Christ and form them after Christ. The result is that what is of God is extended, and, as we read, "the darkness is passing"; it is being gradually displaced, so far as the circle of the saints is concerned by the light. All around the circle of the saints is morally darkness, but it becomes constantly imperative that we should challenge ourselves by these different statements, and as thus discovering our true measure, we should be exercised to take on the truth more. So that we have, "He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him."

**EJH** Would you say that on this line there is nothing neutral and nothing optional?

**AJG** Yes, I would say that - nothing neutral and nothing optional. As the epistle develops we find that we are either of God, or of the devil, and we are of God as born of God. But then the great thing is to identify ourselves in mind with our true nature as of God, and repudiate all else, the Spirit being the power for that. Then, as you say, there is nothing optional either, for the epistle is full of the thought of commandment.

**JGM** What is the distinction between "His commandment" and "His word"?

**AJG** The commandments I think always refer to what is essential and imperative and, in a sense, they stand for all time, but "his word" conveys

more His mind for the moment, so that there is always continual freshness and further fulness in the word.

**HDT** Implying confidence, does it?

**AJG** Yes, and the making known of His mind. One has often thought of Mary of Bethany; it says of her, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus, was listening to his word," Luke 10: 39. But then if the Lord had come to Bethany again a week later she would have been still sitting at His feet "listening to his word," but He would be saying something fresh then. The idea of keeping His word is thus that we have got an ear open to whatever God is saying at any time and are keeping it and following it up.

**JSE** Does that explain the commendation of Philadelphia?

**AJG** Yes, I think it does. It says they kept His word and did not deny His name, the word indeed having first place there.

**APT** In Luke 5 the Lord puts a word to Simon Peter; he hesitates momentarily, but then he says, "at thy word" - would that be for the moment?

**AJG** "At thy word I will let down the net." Well, in a sense, that was a commandment, I suppose. He says, "Draw out into the deep water and let down your nets for a haul," and Peter obeyed.

**AHG** Why is this keeping of the word linked up with the love of God? It says, "in him verily the love of God is perfected."

**AJG** I think the word would bring to our hearts what God has in mind to bring us into, so that the more we keep His word the more we become confirmed in the sense of the love of God.

**HC** Does it link up with the verse in John 14 you quoted this morning?

**AJG** I think it is very useful to link it up with that. First of all in John 14: 21 the Lord says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, *he* it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and *I* will love him and will manifest myself to him" - that is the commandments. Then Judas, not the Iscariote, says, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we" - that is the Father and the Son - "will come to him and make our abode with him." The result really is that the whole Godhead is there, because the Spirit is already there, according to what the Lord had said in verse 16, "another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever," and then in verse 17 "ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you." The result, therefore, of keeping the word of Christ is that

the Father and the Son come, and They make their abode with such; the Spirit is already there, so that the whole Godhead, so to speak, is known in close proximity and the love of God becomes perfected with such.

**WSS** So that would you say this is a constant exercise in connection with the unfolding of the word continually?

**AJG** I think so, and I think we can see that the word of Christ would be constantly fresh.

**WSS** Wonderful possibilities in hearing it and keeping it?

**AJG** Yes.

**GRC** Would the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia suggest the communications that might be bound up with His word, when He speaks of "the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God ... and my new name"?

**AJG** I would think so, but would you say a little more?

**GRC** I was wondering whether the commandments would relate more to what we speak of as the principles of fellowship, but if they are kept it makes way for the unfolding of the divine mind and secrets really as to God Himself and His city and the Lord's new name.

**AJG** I am sure that is so. I think it helps to see that there is the idea of commandment in 2 Timothy 2: 19, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity"; this commandment provides the conditions under which we can come into the truth. Then we get two outstanding commandments in addition; there is the whole of the first epistle to the Corinthians, which is said to be "the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14: 37) and this commandment regulates us in our assembly relations and movements. But then there is the further commandment in John 13 and in this epistle, and that is that we love one another. That provides the mutual conditions of unity and affection, within the conditions brought about by obeying 2 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, in which the fulness of the truth can be enjoyed. Now if those commandments are kept, then I think there is a clear scope for the word in all the fulness of it to be brought out.

**PL** Would Deuteronomy 33 suggest that, "Moses commanded us a law. The inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." But then, "he loveth the peoples, All his saints are in thy hand, And they sit down at thy feet; Each receives of thy words." Is that the opening up of much in Deuteronomy?

**AJG** I would think so.

**FCH** It says in the word to Philadelphia in Revelation 3, "thou ... hast *kept* my word."

**AJG** That is what the Lord values so much and that is what I am sure we need to keep in mind constantly. The Lord is ready to speak and the Spirit is speaking, and as long as we are here there will be fresh speaking. There is need, therefore, for an attentive ear to what the Lord has to say, and what the Spirit says, but then there is not only to be an attentive ear, but we are to be marked by keeping the word in our minds and following it up, and allowing ourselves to be governed by it.

**RJW** What is the difference between 'the word' and "the word of his patience" as in Revelation 3?

**AJG** I do not know that I see much in the way of difference, except that it stresses that the present time is a time calling for patience or endurance. The Lord Himself is waiting on that principle, but throughout the period that calls for patience or endurance the Lord supports us by a living word.

**JAF** Would the keeping of His word imply that we are to be formed by it and give expression to the truth in that way?

**AJG** Oh! surely. What is in mind really is that God should come into expression in the saints; He came into perfect expression in Jesus and now that is to be worked out in the saints.

**LF** Is that why it says here "whoever keeps his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected"?

The truth seems to be connected definitely with the commandments, and the keeping of His word with His love.

**AJG** Yes, the one marked by keeping His word is kept in the constant enjoyment of the love of God.

**WSS** Should we not always be on the look-out for fresh unfoldings of the word as they are treasured up in the Scriptures and made known by the Spirit?

**AJG** We should, I am sure.

**WSS** Do you not feel there is something about us all which gives us an impression that we have reached finality, whereas what we have is infinite, is it not?

**AJG** That is so.

**AB** Would David's mighty men be an illustration of keeping his word? One was thinking of his desire for water from the well of Bethlehem, and how those that were near him broke through and it yielded much to him and to God in result?

**AJG** They were near enough to him to know his longings.

**AH** Would you say a word as to this remarkable assurance at the end of verse 5 - "hereby we know that we are in him."

**AJG** John has in view that we should arrive at fixity, I think, so he speaks of such things as "abiding" - we have later on in the epistle "he that abides in love abides in God." We could hardly get anything greater, I suppose, than abiding in God. Whatever happens God is known and His love is rested in, so that Mr. Taylor years ago linked up the word of Moses in Psalm 90 with this epistle, "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations"; there was a man who was abiding in God.

**ABP** Is there some intimate link between what we are saying and John 1: 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"? I wondered if John using this expression as frequently and as he does, would convey to us the potency (for the lack of a better word) that there is in "the word" as linked on with the Person, who is Himself the expression of God.

**AJG** I am sure that is so.

**PHH** Reminding us of the word in Hebrews 4, would you say; that is, that God Himself is in His word?

**AJG** That is good. That scripture first of all deals with everything that needs to be discerned, and, if need be, exposed, but then the final result of it is that we are left in the presence of God. If we are prepared to face the exposure of everything that needs to be exposed, then we shall find ourselves held in the presence of God.

**EJH** Why is such a strong word as 'liar' used? Later it speaks about *hating* your brother.

**AJG** Because of the urgency of maintaining the truth livingly and in its purity.

**ACSP** What have we to learn from the fact that the assumption that "I know him" is linked with not keeping His commandments?

**AJG** It is just an assumption; it is assuming to know the Lord or to know God and yet being marked by lawlessness. Satan is the origin of all lawlessness, and we cannot possibly really know God, or really know Christ, without loving

Him, and if we love Him we will keep His commandments. We will be sensitive as to anything that is displeasing to Him or contrary to His mind.

**PHH** Implicitly, would such a person, a 'liar,' be morally linked on with the devil? I am thinking of the word in John 8 where the Lord, speaking of the devil, says "he was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks falsehood, he speaks of what is his own; for he is a liar and its father." Does that make the apostle's term here a very solemn one, that such a person should be designated a liar?

**AJG** It does, so that in the book of Revelation every liar finds his place in the lake of fire.

**WD** Cain was marked by these features; he was a murderer and a liar.

**AJG** Quite, so. We shall find that in the next chapter, if the Lord will, Cain is brought in as the one who was of the wicked one, the one through whom Satan's influence first took form in, you might say, a progenitive way.

**CH** The scripture quoted just now from John 8 seems to give just that extension you are speaking about, for the Lord goes on to say, "and because I speak the truth, ye do not believe me." It is not just that the enemy is the father of lies, but the Lord extends it to those who refuse what He had to say.

**AJG** Quite so. It says "he," that is the devil, "is a liar and its father," as though he begets others of that character. There is the danger that all that kind of thing can come into professed Christianity, and hence the apostle is insisting on genuineness and truth marking the saints, and our walk together being governed by the light in which God is known.

**AHG** Could we have a little help as to what is involved in the expression "in him" - "Hereby we know that we are in him."

**AJG** Well, that may be either in Christ or in God. We come to it in the last chapter of this epistle where it says, "we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true" - that is 'in God' - but "we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ." We thus come to fixed conditions and a fixed position in the love of God in Christ, and the more we are kept in the enjoyment of the love of God the more we know that we are in Him; it is the fixed position into which God has brought us.

**ABP** Is this more than status?

**AJG** It surely is, because it is a question of what we know.

**EuR** Has not Mr. Taylor connected 'abiding in the Son' with the solar system?

**AJG** Well, Mr. Raven often did and I have no doubt Mr. Taylor has too. Mr. Raven often remarked about John's writings being linked up with astronomical ideas, so that just as the earth is kept in relation to the sun, so the believer is held in relation to Christ.

**FCH** Is it challenging and salutary to keep in mind how very near Satan is to us in all these things? I was thinking of what is said of Satan himself, transforming himself into an angel of light.

**AJG** That is so, and it is particularly stressed in John 13 where the most precious things are set before us. The Lord there is about to introduce precious things, but at that point Satan had put something into the heart of Judas. Judas was present when the Lord washed their feet, but then finally Satan enters into him, and then he goes out. It is particularly emphasised in that chapter that in the presence of the most precious things Satan is near.

**PHH** Do you think that the family, as John speaks here of "my children" and then presently "children," then in the next chapter "children of God," is calculated to keep us right and free from these elements and growing in the truth?

**AJG** I do.

**PHH** I was thinking that it needs more than ministry; does it not need the affectionate surroundings, where the saints are and where, you might say, divine Persons are near and at home?

**AJG** I am sure that is so. Cain has been alluded to, and we find, in connection with his history, that it says that Eve bore Abel his brother. As soon as Cain comes on the scene God gives him a brother, as though He had in him the circle of the brethren, you might say, in which the truth was to be enjoyed and worked out. Alas! that only brought out that Cain was of that wicked one and hated his brother, but the stress on the brother in Genesis 4 is very remarkable in those verses in relation to Cain and Abel.

**ABP** Cain is never called 'a brother,' is he?

**AJG** No, he is not, but Abel was his brother.

**WC** Is not Peter in John 6 an example of one who was maintained in his orbit in relation to Christ? It speaks there of some that "walked no more with him," but Peter says "to whom shall we go? Thou hast words of life eternal." Does not the thought of walk come in here as a sequel to what we have been saying, in the sense that we should walk even as He walked?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**WC** Is that the secret? There is the Person and His communications, and it held Peter and those with him and he could say "we," could he not?

**AJG** Yes, and the result contemplated is that we should abide in Christ. In the next chapter we find that whoever abides in Him does not sin, so that, in a practical way, the saints are in mind to be delivered completely from the influence of every form of lawlessness by simply being held in their affections and faith in relation to Christ and learning from Him.

**EJH** Would you say that as soon as Cain had a brother, his brother became a test to him, as our brethren are a test to us in that respect as to whether there is truth in the inward parts?

**AJG** Well, maybe, they are sometimes a test, but they are a great encouragement, comfort and support and that is what God intends in the circle of the brethren.

**EJH** I was feeling that we may have jealousy or other feelings in our hearts towards our brethren,

or toward a brother, so that each one of us has to be maintained in constant self-judgment?

**AJG** Quite so, but Abel only became a test to his brother because Abel maintained the truth.

**PHH** Would it be right to say here that the individuals mentioned are characterised by certain things, "he who says," "he that loves," "he that hates," and so on, whereas the circle as a whole is also referred to when John says, "Beloved, I write no new commandment to you ... " and so on? Would John always keep us in touch in that sense with the circle while enabling us to discern anything which is right and anything which is wrong operating in any person?

**AJG** Yes, I think so, and hence he brings in now this commandment in the section from verses 7 - 11. I suppose the commandment is love; he says, "I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which ye have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye heard "that is, it is what they had learned in Christ, it is not anything new, it is the old commandment which they had had from the beginning. On the other hand, it is new, for the Lord Himself says, "A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another" (John 13: 34), and it is new in the sense that it is now true not only in Christ, but in the saints. Love is seen substantially now in the saints and there is a circle on earth in which the darkness is passing or has passed and the true light shines.

**JTS** Is it interesting that the old commandment is "the word which ye heard"?

**AJG** The 'word,' I take it, would be the impression they would get from Christ, do you not think?

**JTS** Something more than what He said, what they had found expressed livingly in Him?

**AJG** I am sure of that, and therefore it was following on His laying aside His garments and taking a linen towel, and pouring water into a basin, and washing their feet, and wiping them with the linen towel with which He was girded, that the Lord said, "a new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." But really that was 'the word,' there was the living expression of the thing in Christ.

**JW** "Which thing is true in him and in you." I am emphasising the "thing," is that the substantial side?

**AJG** It is the substantial side, exactly.

**GCS** Do you think that the saints love one another more than they ever did? The injunction you are giving us is necessary, but is there not an evidence today that there is more love in activity to one another than ever there has been?

**AJG** I think it would be true to say that, but then the word is "more and more"; that is what Scripture says.

**WSS** With regard to the words just quoted "which thing is true in him and in you," does that include the sort of life, the eternal life that has been mentioned in chapter 1?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**WSS** The character of life that was in Jesus?

**AJG** Quite so.

**EuR** Does Philippians 2 bear on that, "irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life"?

**AJG** Yes, I think that links with this, so that you might say that the darkness is passing. The world around is all darkness morally, and becoming more and more so, but in the circle of the saints there is the true light shining.

**RGB** Would this make our local settings peculiarly attractive to us? I was thinking of the local setting as where divine love can be peculiarly experienced and where love can be worked out in our relations with one another.

**AJG** Yes, I am sure that is important, because it is in our local settings that we are near to one another, and the circumstances of each and the composition of the local company are all ordered of God with a view to the development of His own nature in the saints.

**ECM** Does Peter's word help - "having purified your souls by obedience to the truth to unfeigned brotherly love, love one another out of a pure heart fervently"? I was thinking of how it would stress the importance of the truth.

**AJG** So that the holding to the truth works out in "unfeigned brotherly love," and that really, as his second epistle shows, and as this verse in the first epistle shows, leads on to love, love "out of a pure heart fervently." I think we need to bear in mind that love amongst ourselves is not simply for our own mutual enjoyment and help, but because God Himself being love can only dwell congenially in conditions of love. If, therefore, we want to have God with us in known nearness, we must provide conditions of love amongst ourselves.

**EJH** And there is no respect of persons with God, so there will be no partiality?

**AJG** Quite so.

**WC** Does not the beginning of Ephesians 5 give it the setting in a local company? "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"; there is a yield for God in that passage?

**AJG** Yes, and Christ becomes the standard, so that one who is abiding in Christ will learn to move as He moved.

**WC** The family of God is in mind in the expression "as beloved children"?

**AJG** Yes.

**PHH** Do you think that our sins having been forgiven for His name's sake would lay a common basis with us all for drawing near together and loving one another?

**AJG** I am sure it would, and do you not think the sense that we have all had to have sins forgiven, and that they are forgiven, would help to subdue us? It is a wonderful bond that the apostle, in that way, brings in a ground that we can all come on to before he introduces the thought of differences in stature.

**PHH** I wondered whether the different grades and stature would be a help to us; it would not be a hindrance that there were the different ones and some were further on than others. Should all that be a help to us in the family?

**AJG** Well, it certainly should. Fathers would be an example and an encouragement to those who are children.

**GRC** Would you say another word as to the relation between the "new commandment" and the commandments in the plural? The "new commandment" comes into John 13 and the "commandments" in John 14; here they are put into the opposite order. Do you regard the "new commandment" as governing the whole position, so that the way in which we keep the Lord's "commandments" in detail would be governed overall by the "new commandment"?

**AJG** I think so. We might have the truth, and be in a position as separated from evil according to 2 Timothy; we might have all the order of the assembly and know it all, but if we have not love amongst ourselves we really have nothing. Paul says, "if I ... have not love, I am nothing." Hence we can see that while Timothy and Corinthians are of the greatest importance, the "new commandment" of John's writings is necessary to fill out the whole position.

**GAL** Does verse 8 of our chapter in a peculiar way stress the importance of the Holy Spirit by which we are made partakers of the divine nature and thus have the capacity to fill this out? That which was true in Christ becomes subjectively true in us.

**AJG** Yes, I think so. That is what I had in mind in saying that I think one can see more and more that the way that God has met what came in through sin is by entering into the position Himself, first in Christ and then in the Spirit, the Spirit given to the saints.

**JMcK** When the apostle says "the darkness is passing" is he engaging us with the sphere where this divine work is proceeding in the saints? Is that where it is passing?

**AJG** Yes, I understand so. It is not passing in the world, for "the whole world lies in the wicked one," but it is passing in the saints. As the work of God progresses, you can say, more and more, that the darkness is being dispersed.

**GRC** In Revelation 21 that you referred to this morning it has passed completely.

**AJG** Yes.

**JMcK** I was wondering whether the glory of what is brought out in the first chapter, what is manifested and reported, is now having a commensurate answer in the saints as the darkness passes?

**AJG** That is what is in mind.

**HFR** Would you say something as to the way the Lord is brought into this, "which thing *is* true in him," not *was* true?

**AJG** Well, it says in Ephesians 5: 14, "Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee." Christ is always shining upon us, and the glory of God in His face is shining upon us too, so that love is always shining upon us if we will keep ourselves in the light of it.

**HDT** Is it remarkable that the character of the love is shown by what the Lord said in John 15: 9, "as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you - abide in my love."

**AJG** So that it was the abiding portion of Christ as Man here, that He abode in His Father's love. But He did it on the principle of keeping His commandments, and now He is suggesting that we should take on exactly the same feature.

**HDT** Would not that make for the continuance and stability of the whole position?

**AJG** It would.

**HW** Would you connect what has just been said, "which thing is true in him and in you," with the verse in Ephesians 4: 20, 21, "but ye have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus"?

**AJG** I think I would, because it involves the putting off of the old, and then the putting on of the new, and Christ is really the setting out of the features of the new.

**HW** Why does it say "in Jesus" and not "in Christ"?

**AJG** I think to direct our thoughts to Jesus personally and not simply to Him as in a kind of official position.

**CWO'LM** What is involved in the expression "the true light"?

**AJG** I take it it is the true light of God, in contrast to all that is false in the world around. There is a great deal that is false religiously around us today and it was increasing very much in John's day so that it is a question of the true light.

**JMcD** Is there a link with what we have here and the true light in John 1, where it is applied to the Lord?

**AJG** Yes, I think so; quote the verse, please.

**JMcD** The reference to the Lord Jesus in John 1: 9, "the true light." Is it the continuation of that now, exactly the same light in the saints?

**AJG** That is what is in mind, that what came out in Christ is now continued in the children of God.

**WSS** And it says, "and the true light already shines." It is not merely that it ought to, but it *does* shine. Is it not a wonderful thing to realise that?

**AJG** It is shining, yes; that is the whole point.

**ABP** Was Paul vitally in the gain of this in 2 Corinthians 4 when death was being taken on in a practical way, and yet he rejoices that while death is working in himself and those with him, life is working in the saints? Is that the way this works out in a practical way in relation to one another?

**AJG** Yes, it is. Is it not a question of laying down our lives, in principle, for the brethren? It may take many forms, but that is the idea.

**ABP** He seems to me so in the gain of the light "the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine." He speaks of the radiancy of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." I wondered if that was what was really sustaining him in his soul and helping him to lay down his life for the brethren?

**AJG** I am sure that is so. He says there "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus." It is not exactly the death of Jesus, but the "dying of Jesus," as though love carried Jesus as far as that, and Paul was carrying that in his mind and was taking on similar features.

**APCL** So that does the question of the "occasion of stumbling" in verse 10 flow really out of the matter of our abiding in the light?

**AJG** Yes, that such an one does not provide any occasion of stumbling.

**APCL** It is not the erring one in that sense, it is "he that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him." Is that not a matter for self-judgment, abiding in the light?

**AJG** Well, quite so; if one abides in the light one's movements will be consistent with the light, and they are not likely to cause any occasion of stumbling.

**CH** There seems to be an immediate connection between love and light; it says, "he that loves his brother abides in light" - it does not say abides in love - and then if he does not love his brother, there is an element of darkness. Can you say a little more about that, because so often when the truth is being pursued or becomes a matter of controversy, often what is personal beclouds the issue?

**AJG** I suppose it is important if we love our brethren that we should be exercised to abide in the light, otherwise our very influence over our brethren, through loving them, may result in their being turned aside, do you not think?

**CH** That is really what I wanted to get at, because I am sure we are all concerned to get at the truth, as the governing feature of this section, but do you think it would help greatly if love were in activity at the same time?

**AJG** Quite so, but all must be governed by the light. God is not only light, but He is "in the light" and the light in which He is now known is to govern us in all our movements.

**CH** We so often separate it in our minds?

**AJG** Quite so.

**AH** Is that seen in the case of Paul and Peter at Antioch?

**AJG** It is, Paul was governed by the light. He loved his brother, but his love was regulated by the light, and therefore he rebuked his brother when his brother was taking a wrong course.

**EJH** Does that add to brotherly love, love?

**AJG** Yes.

**HDT** Paul would speak in love, of course, would he not?

**AJG** Oh! he would indeed.

**HDT** I was thinking of what you have often remarked on in Corinthians, "be vigilant; stand fast in the faith; quit yourselves like men; be strong." That is a very peremptory word, but it adds, "Let all things ye do be done in love," 1 Corinthians 16: 13, 14.

**AJG** Well, quite so, love would govern Paul in his withstanding Peter to the face, but he did withstand him to the face.

**HDT** Because he was to be blamed?

**AJG** Yes.

**WD** When writing to Philemon. Paul says, "for love's sake," but he would hold to the truth, whether it be Peter's ministry or John's or his own.

**AJG** I have no doubt that is right, but what are you referring to in relation to Peter's ministry, and John's and Paul's?

**WD** The name Archippus in verse 2 of that epistle means 'governor,' which would link with Peter's ministry, and Apphia means 'faithfulness' which would

link with Paul's ministry and Philemon's name links with love which would be John's line.

**AJG** Paul shines in his epistle to Philemon by the Spirit of Christ that marks him, so that he says to Philemon that if Onesimus owes him anything that was to be put to Paul's account.

**ALRT** Do verses 9 and 10 show what a lot hangs upon one's attitude of heart towards one's brother? I was thinking of one's way as to the light and the truth?

**AJG** I think it is a matter for all of us to bear in mind, and perhaps more so as we get older, that if we become aware of having any influence at all among the saints our responsibility is all the greater to abide in the light and to follow up the truth, or else the very influence we have got may tend to turn the brethren aside.

**ABP** Does the use of the word 'brother' here mean that this is not simply a doctrinal matter, but in our local settings we have the ways and means of working it all out in a practical way?

**AJG** I am sure that is important, so that it is not a general idea or theoretical idea, but the local company is where the truth is worked out.

Well, we ought to get on to the latter part of the chapter now, and consider John's word to the fathers and then to the young men and then to the little children, for you can see that spiritual affection is breathed by John in what he says to these different classes among the saints.

**PL** So that each grade is clothed with family glory and feelings; it prevents the looking down upon the young, do you think?

**AJG** Indeed, he has more to say to the little children than to any of them, showing the affection there is with him and his care for them. But he first addresses the fathers as though he would keep the divine ideal before the minds of all the brethren, the whole family, for the fathers are characterised as having "known him that is from the beginning," that is Christ.

**PHH** Who are the fathers?

**AJG** Those who are marked by this feature, I would say.

**PHH** Would that mean maturity through companying with Christ?

**AJG** Well, I suppose it can be worked out now amongst the saints. There are none, of course, that were in the company of Christ amongst the saints now, but there are fathers who by the Spirit's work have just got Christ before

them. They keep before their minds and hearts the One who is from the beginning as the great standard, do you think?

**PHH** Yes, I was just thinking that. The thing really shines in John, he saying "my children" means a fatherly element. Would that work out in what has been learnt in the delightful company of Christ being passed on to the family?

**AJG** Yes.

**GRC** Was fatherhood, in that way, fully seen in Jesus?

**AJG** He addresses His disciples as "children" in John 13 and John 21. Is that what you had in mind?

**GRC** Yes. I had that in mind; He says "He that has seen me has seen the Father."

**AJG** Yes.

**EJH** It speaks about young men, but it does not say anything about old men. The next stage is fathers, I was not thinking of age, but no doubt the thought of a father suggests that he is looking to the next generation and giving the next generation the benefit of his experience and links with God?

**AJG** Well, quite so. At the end of Psalm 45 it says, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons," as though as the fathers are removed, so to speak, there should be those able to take their place.

**APT** Would you help us in regard of the verse "For if ye should have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers." Is that applicable now?

**AJG** Well, I think it should be. Fathers are those who have an influence because of their affection for the saints and because of what they are, in moral power, so that they can exemplify the truth.

**HDT** Do you think it may shine in a relatively young person?

**AJG** I think it might; I think Timothy was really a father.

**HDT** It says of Hezekiah, when he was only 25 years old, that he gathered the Levites and addressed them as "My sons, be not now negligent."

**AJG** Yes.

**APT** Paul says, following up that very expression in 1 Corinthians, "For this reason I have sent to you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ."

**AJG** Quite so. Timothy really would bring the father before them in a way, because it would not be exactly an impression of Timothy he would leave, but

an impression of Paul.

**APT** My thought was, without proceeding any further, the difference between the thought of the father and the ten thousand instructors.

**AJG** That is a word for us all, I am sure. We may all be more or less clear as to the truth and able to set it out, but how far are we able to exemplify the truth and exercise moral influence among the saints because of what we are, and because of our love for the saints?

**GAL** Do you think the expression "because ye have known him that is from the beginning" really involves the knowledge of the blessed Lord according to His glory in the first chapter of John? Do you think it stresses that side particularly?

**AJG** What have you in mind when you say according to His glory in John 1?

**GAL** The glory of His Person and the great glory of the incarnation - God manifest in flesh. It says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

**AJG** Well, I think it would involve a definite appreciation of that, and, of course, in all that we say in regard of our appreciation of Christ and our knowledge of Him, the truth as to His Person underlies it all, and is always carried by us. But I think the knowledge of Him that is "from the beginning" really involves a real appreciation of what shone in Him as a Man, the standard of all that is pleasing to God in men.

**AWGT** Is that in keeping with the scripture in Ephesians, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ"?

**AJG** Yes, and that we are to grow up unto Him in all things.

**ABP** In Acts 1 Peter says "that of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day in which he was taken up from us." Does that cover it?

**AJG** That covers it, I think. It is all that they learned in Christ, and that is what John is insisting on, because he was countering what was then prevalent and is still, of course, prevalent in the Christian profession, that there is such a thing as development. There was the suggestion that what was seen in apostolic days could be added to and improved upon, and he is countering that by insisting that Christianity must take character from that which was from the beginning as set out in Christ.

**JTS** Does this take us back to verse 1 of the epistle, "that which was from the beginning"? I was wondering whether in regard of this matter we could think

of what was said concerning the birth of Jesus in Luke 1: 35, "the holy thing ... which shall be born shall be called Son of God." That reference looks on to the time of the Lord's baptism, when He was owned as Son of God, and does that link up with what was said about those who had companied with them all the time from the baptism of John?

**AJG** I think that is right. The expression "the holy thing" introduces the idea of substance, what is substantial, but then what is born testimony to, and what is the basis of this epistle, is that which they apprehended in Christ from John's baptism till the time of His being taken up. It was manhood in the features of it pleasing to God that was under their eye from that time till He was taken up.

**PHH** There was no admonition in this first address, verse 13. John says, "I write to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father." He does not include any admonition or exhortation, but he does when he goes over it again saying "I have written to you." Is that in view of the present necessity and what was coming in?

**AJG** Yes, and, as you say, he has no special exhortation to the fathers. It is sufficient that they have known and know Him that is from the beginning, but they are included in the exhortation in verse 28, "And now, children" - that covers them all - "abide in him." That is all that is necessary to say to fathers, you might say; if they have known, and know, him that is from the beginning, all that is necessary to say to them is 'go on like that' - "abide in him."

**TJG** Does not the footnote to the word 'known' in verse 13 suggest that a certain state is produced by this knowledge and that that state continues?

**AJG** Yes, it is important to see that.

**CH** It also applies to the word 'overcome,' does it not?

**AJG** Quite so.

**CWO'LM** Is there any difference between "him that is from the beginning" and what has been referred to in chapter 1 "that which was from the beginning"?

**AJG** It makes it more personal. The thought is the same, that we go back, in our minds, and maintain what was from the beginning, but then it was set out in Christ. It is the Person of Christ that the fathers have in their hearts.

**JMcG** Beloved Mr. Taylor said that the fathers have come to a right appreciation of Christ as presented in the four Gospels.

**AJG** I am sure that is the thought. We want all four Gospels to get a full view of Him that is from the beginning. But then if we have got Christ in our hearts, what we have got to do is to "abide in him," because even though we might be fathers, we are in danger of being turned aside so long as we are here, and therefore we must make up our minds to "abide in him."

**HDT** That involves the Lord in His present position, does it not?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**EuR** What is the import in his saying exactly the same thing twice to the fathers, as to the Son?

**AJG** Just to stress it, I suppose; that is all that is necessary. But then for the young men, which possibly includes a great many of us, he says, "I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." But then he says, "Love not the world, nor the things in the world." I suppose the word of God abode in them and they had overcome the wicked one in the sense that they were sound in the truth, that is they were not in danger of that of which the little children were in danger, that is, antichristian teaching. They had overcome in that sense, but they were in danger of being overcome by the world.

**HAH** Would the little children knowing the Father link with the reception in Luke 15?

**AJG** Well, it links, I take it, with the reception of the Spirit. Every true believer, as having the Holy Spirit, has received a spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father"; even the little children know something of that, as having the Spirit.

**JSE** Would it be right to think of Mr. Darby, at the Plymouth and Bethesda crisis, as shining in the character of a father, cherishing all that was due to Christ, because of his own knowledge of Him?

**AJG** I am sure that is right. What gave Mr. Darby his power in standing for the truth and in ministering it was his knowledge of Christ. You can see that in his letters and in his ministry.

**EJH** Why is there a distinction between "the world" and "the things in the world"?

**AJG** I venture to think that it is "the things in the world" that we are much more in danger of than the world itself. I think, speaking generally, that the

saints who are seeking to walk in the truth, are free of the world as a system, but there is considerable danger of bringing the things of the world into the Christian circle. We are therefore told not to love the things that are in the world, and their character is set out for us, and then it says they are not of the Father but of the world. So that the knowledge of the Father, what the Father loves and delights in, is brought in here as salvation from what the young men were in danger of.

**ABP** Do you think that the classification - "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," is categorising the things which appeal to the man, whether it is body, soul or spirit?

**AJG** You connect the "lust of the flesh" with the body, "the lust of the eyes" with the soul, and "the pride of life" with the spirit of a man?

**ABP** Yes.

**AJG** That is suggestive, I think, if we may refer to the types, the children of Israel were delivered from the world when they were brought out of Egypt, but it was the things of the world they had to face in overcoming Jericho.

**AHG** Does this reference to children suggest established relationships with the Father right from the early days?

**AJG** Yes, I would think so. If we take account of the Father, He has a world of His own, and the Son is the centre of it, and the Son gives character to that world, so that all that the Father loves and that is going to give character to His world is to be learned in Christ.

**HDT** Were you going to say any more about Jericho?

**AJG** Well, Jericho stood athwart the progress of the people of God as they were about to enter into their inheritance, and I think it is the things of the world that hinder the saints. It may be small things, but they hinder the saints from entering fully into their inheritance.

**HDT** Was their salvation to remain outside of it all? They encircled it outside, did they not?

**AJG** Well, yes, but then they had to overthrow it; it had to come down before them. But what it brought to light was that while it was overthrown in power, yet in fact an element of the world was there, in their very midst, with Achan; that came to light. So we find in the apostolic testimony at Pentecost the world was overthrown, you can see that, in the company of the saints. There was a company in which there was no element of the world for the moment, but very soon the principle of Achan appeared with Ananias and Sapphira. So

that I am quite sure it is the *things* of the world, rather than the world itself, that are the great danger of the saints who are walking in separation.

**ACSP** Does the matter of the hiding with Achan, and the deception with Ananias and Sapphira, link with the darkness you were speaking of this morning?

**AJG** It would. It is significant that before the matter of Achan had come to light they are confronted by Ai, and they are marked by self-confidence, and think it is only a little town, and so they send only a few men to smite it. That is just the danger, that we get overcome by a little thing; we are not careful enough about little things, and God had to teach them in connection with Ai that they must be careful about little things.

**MPS** Is it significant that the Lord has so much to say about the world in His prayer to the Father in John 17? There are repeated references to the world, for example, "I have given them thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world," and then again, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." And then He culminates it all by saying, "Righteous Father - and the world has not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

**AJG** Hence John in this epistle shows the true character of the world as God sees it. He says, "is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing, and its lust." Just as later on he says, "the whole world lies in the wicked one."

**FCH** Achan spoke about a beautiful mantle of Shinar. Does that suggest that Achan had not judged it?

**AJG** Quite so, so that it is Christ who is the great portion of the fathers, it is the Father that is brought in in relation to the young men and then it is the unction, the Holy Spirit, who is brought in in relation to the little children. They do know the Father, of course, that is mentioned also, but the Spirit is the great safeguard for the little children, according to this passage.

**ABP** Why is it referred to as the unction?

**AJG** I suppose it is the Spirit as particularly affecting the mind, and giving intelligence in the things of God. Would you think so?

**ABP** Does this word link on with the thought of an unguent? There seems to be a process involved?

**PHH** It is the same as anointing.

**AJG** Yes, it seems to be power in relation to the things of God, power to understand the truth and to detect and refuse what is contrary to the truth.

**HDT** Would it involve the development of what is instinctive?

**AJG** Yes, I think it does involve that.

**GRC** Does it not mean in that way that the Holy Spirit equips us with all the five spiritual senses, the sense of smell, taste and touch, hearing and sight spiritually?

**AJG** Yes, I would think that.

**PHH** Do you see anything in the use of the word 'antichrist,' that is Christ, as a word, meaning 'the anointed' and this great paragraph being full of the unction or the anointing. Do you think the unction, in that sense, is the great answer to everything which is coming in against Christ?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. And while verse 22, no doubt, has a certain Jewish bearing, I think it is important, "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?" It is that kind of Man that is the anointed of God; we want to keep in mind that *Jesus* is the Christ. Every antichristian teaching will in some way or another exalt the first man, but *Jesus* is the Christ and every other man is excluded.

**WC** Could you say a word as to the character of strength in the young men and the word of God abiding in them? Does that refer to intelligence in the truth?

**AJG** I am inclined to think so.

**WC** I was wondering whether the little children have not arrived at that, they have got instincts to preserve them?

**AJG** I think that is the general bearing of the passage. The young men are sound in the truth, and, therefore, would detect and refuse anything that was antichristian, but the babes or little children are in danger of what is antichristian, but their safeguard lies in the instinctive knowledge they have in the spirit.

**PL** So they are potentially viewed as on their feet, are they not, in the power of the unction? It is there.

**AJG** Yes, quite so, potentially.

**ABP** I wondered if this is not important in relation to the young people amongst us. The truth as to the Spirit has opened a very real exercise as to whether the Spirit is really indwelling, and there may be a disappointment

ofttimes that there is not more indication of it in a living practical way. I wondered if it would help if we just stress this matter of what the development is. The Lord Jesus could say in John 4, "The water which I shall give him shall become in him," and the Lord speaks too of the new wine in the new bottles, because the old bottles would burst; it is not because of what the wine is when it is first put in, but because of the power it develops. I wondered whether that might not be an encouragement to some of our young people to see that it is a matter of a process, which involves sowing to the Spirit and making room for the Spirit and calling upon the Spirit?

**AJG** I am sure that is important. It helps, I think, to bear in mind that the Spirit is always faithful to Christ and His death, and I think if young ones and those who are older too will keep that in mind, they will find it will help them. He is always faithful to Christ, He would make much of Christ in their hearts, but He would always remind them that the way by which that is really to come into the soul is in the acceptance, more and more, of the full import of His death, which involves the setting aside of what I am according to flesh.

**AWGT** And would the process that has been suggested be confirmed in the fact that the neuter is used, the unction?

**AJG** Well, here it is said that "the same unction teaches." So that while there is instinct, there is also that which becomes intelligent; the unction teaches.

**APCL** What is involved in "ye have not need that any one should teach you"?

**AJG** Just that they are made entirely independent of human learning. It does not mean that they do not need teachers whom the Lord has given as gifts to the assembly; it simply means that they are entirely independent of human learning.

**APCL** Having been brought into a circle where the Spirit Himself resides and where everything flows in Him?

**AJG** So that a little child having the Spirit, knows far more than the most educated man who has not the Spirit.

**JSE** Does this "anyone" refer to those outside the family, "Ye have not need that anyone should teach you"?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. But I suppose, while in no way despising or ignoring gifts, it would help us to cultivate making room for the Spirit, as has been said, so that we are conscious that the Spirit Himself teaches us. It is a most important matter to arrive at the truth in the Spirit. The gifts the Lord may give are just intended to help us on that line.

**HDT** The gifts the Lord has given convey the light to us, but they do not operate in the soul. It is the Spirit that does that.

**AJG** Quite so.

**PL** So that things are only reached substantially and tangibly in the Spirit?

**AJG** Exactly.

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (3)

*1 John 3; Genesis 4: 8 - 11; Genesis 5: 21 - 24*

**AJG** This third chapter gives us the two generations that are in the world - the children of God and the children of the devil. John, as is his practice, states the truth abstractly, and therefore absolutely, and he commences with a call to us to take account of the Father's love to us, that we should be given this position of children of God in the world, involving that, as it says, "the world knows us not, because it knew him not." That is, the children of God are representative of God in His nature and moral character, and they come into a position which corresponds in some sense with that of the Lord when He said prophetically, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me," Psalm 69: 9. The opposition to God, which the testimony to what He is called forth, vented itself on Christ; and now the children of God are in a similar position; because we are children the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. At the same time we are to glory in the fact that we are children of God. It is an expression of the Father's love to us, and it helps to mark out the position of the children of God from the children of the devil, in that the children of God are made to feel what the world is in opposition to what is of God. Hence this all helps us on the lines of which we are speaking, the lines of being really in the enjoyment of eternal life as entirely apart from the course and spirit of the world.

**JMcK** Referring to your remark about the two generations, is it a principle in the ways of God that the truth is worked out in generations? I was thinking of the way the book of Genesis is interspersed with generations, whether it be the great thoughts of God or whether it be the world system. We see it worked out, and the practical characteristics coming to light in the generations.

**AJG** Yes, I think that is so, and therefore we can trace things to their origin. Here things are taken back to their origin. Either people are of God or they are of the devil, and the devil, it says, sins from the beginning.

**JAP** Are we children by divine generation, as the last verse of the previous chapter suggests?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. I think it helps to see that God in His moral character and nature has come into testimony, and it has had the effect of begetting those morally like Him.

**GRC** Would you mind helping as to why we are spoken of as children of God, and in Paul's ministry sons of God, and not children of the Father or sons of

the Father? In the verse just referred to, the pronoun is left open; it just says we are "begotten of him."

**AJG** That is characteristic of John's epistle, that we are "begotten of *him*," and then it says, "the world knows us not, because it knew *him* not." The world morally did not know God, but God was presented in testimony to the world in Christ, so that it was Christ that the world did not know, and yet it was God that it did not know. That is characteristic of John, that he presents the truth in that way.

**ECM** Is the right to be called the children of God based on our receiving Christ and believing on His name, as in John 1?

**AJG** Yes, that is right, and so it says, "but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name; who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God." So that you have got the believing on His name - that is our side of the matter, the responsibility to receive the testimony that is presented - but then we get the secret underlying it, that all those who do receive it have been born of God.

**PL** Would the reference to God here - there are 29 references to God in the next chapter and about 40 in these three chapters - have the testimony in view?

**AJG** I think so - testimony to God. That is the great subject of testimony in the world, what God is. That is what has been called in question by the challenge raised by the enemy and the introduction of sin, and that has got to be met.

**APCL** Is the way in which he presents it as the "love the Father has given to us" to strengthen us inwardly in relation to the Father and His love? It is not 'See how great the position of children is,' but "See what love the Father has given to us."

**AJG** Yes, exactly. So that it is a very appealing thought in that way, as though we are called upon to stop and consider it in order to be impressed with the love the Father has given to us.

**APCL** I wondered if that would be the spring of filling out the place as children.

**AJG** I am sure it would.

**AB** Does it have in mind that as children of God we are to be nourished and nurtured in the Father's love, and thus grow in power so that the testimony to

Him may be stronger?

**AJG** Yes, quite so. As children we are the objects of His care, but then we are here in testimony to what God is. We bear testimony to it by reason of what we are.

**APCL** Matthew speaks of "sons of your Father who is in the heavens." Is that a matter, too, of representation of the Father?

**AJG** Yes, it is.

**APCL** How would you distinguish between that and the children of God?

**AJG** Well, sons, I suppose, convey the thought of dignity and, so to speak, representation, but children is that we are representatives, not exactly in any formal way, but because of what we are, because we are of His family.

**GRC** As regards the thought of generation, the Lord says in John's gospel, "every one that is born of the Spirit," and then we have the expression in Scripture as to Christ, "he shall see a seed," Isaiah 53: 10. Could you give further help as to the way God as such enters into the question of generation?

**AJG** He enters into it, I think, in testimony. I think the histories of Adam and Eve, and then Cain and Abel, greatly help in this, that when God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skin there was the testimony in that to righteousness and love. The question of sin had to be met righteously, and it is met in the death of Christ to which the coats of skin bore witness. But then it is not only that righteousness comes into expression, but love comes into expression. Those are the two great things that this chapter is occupied with, righteousness and love. That was the testimony presented to men, and that was the testimony for which Cain and Abel were responsible. Now Cain rejected the testimony to righteousness and took his own way, and therefore knew nothing of love. If we accept the testimony of righteousness, we become instructed in love, because righteousness has found its expression in the great gift of God's love, of His Son, to die for us. The two things are thus bound up together, and receiving the testimony of righteousness and love we become begotten by it and take on similar features.

**ABP** Is there an intimation of what is in the writer's mind in the previous chapter, when he says, "I write to you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake"? I wondered if the "for his *name's* sake" has in mind the testimony.

**AJG** I am sure it has, and reminds us in that way of the way in which our sins have been forgiven. We are not to rest, so to speak, in the fact that our sins

have been forgiven, but we are directed in our thoughts to Christ and all that He has done. Is that what is in your mind?

**ABP** Yes, and it is not a matter of relief, but “for his name’s sake” involves the testimony.

**AJG** Well, quite so. It is like the man who was brought to the Lord as marked by paralysis, and the Lord first forgave his sins and then gave him power to walk as a testimony.

**ABP** Yes, quite.

**AHG** Would this expression, “call,” have testimony in view?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**WC** Who is it that calls them the children of God? It does not say that of the children of the devil, does it, that they are called that? Would it mean that the divine features are there, so that it is obvious that God has a family here, and a generation, that express Him?

**AJG** I should think it means that, that they become recognised as children of God. It says at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians there; they got a name that identified them with Christ.

**WmH** Would it link on with John 1, where Peter is called Cephas, as bearing the features of a stone?

**AJG** That would be what *the Lord* called him, would it not?

**WmH** Yes.

**AJG** It is like Adam naming the features of the work of God in the creatures as they are brought to him, so that, as Peter came to the Lord, the Lord said, “thou shalt be called Cephas,” giving him his name.

**WC** At Antioch it was those around, I suppose, who called them Christians?

**AJG** Yes.

**WC** But here it says, “the world knows us not.”

**HDT** Whilst features that are pleasing to God are in view, are we not impressed with the fact of the privilege of belonging to the family of God in this passage? Is not that rather the emphasis?

**AJG** It is a great privilege, certainly, and we are to rejoice in it, the love the Father has given to us that we should be called that. It is a very great privilege to be here in testimony to God.

**EJH** And does it mean that all the children are like one another, because they are all like the same Father?

**AJG** That is the idea, as I understand it. Had you something more in mind just now, Mr. C.?

**WC** No. I was just wondering why it is that the love is connected with the Father, and the calling with God, children of God. Can you help us on that? It says, "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God"; it is not children of the Father, as was said.

**AJG** The Father stands in relation to the family. The children take character from the father; that is, the father of the family. But then, of course, the Father is God, and it is a question of God coming into testimony in His children.

**WC** And is the Father's love, so to speak, the support we have behind it? That is maintained practically in the sphere of testimony?

**AJG** Quite so.

**HFR** Are the two sides brought in in Romans 8, "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. And if children, heirs also - and then, "if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him"?

**AJG** Well, that is what we have here, "what we shall be has not yet been manifested." That does not mean that we do not know what we shall be; it means it has not been manifested publicly yet, but "we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him."

**ABP** And does not the calling emphasise the substantiality that you spoke of yesterday? The creatures which Adam named had certain features and distinctiveness that he could put a name upon.

**AJG** Quite so; each one bearing some impress of divine glory, doubtless. But now the children are intended to represent God fully, not simply certain features, but what He is in His nature and moral character.

**FGS** Had Paul this in mind in Ephesians 5, when he says, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us."

**AJG** Quite so. So that we can see what an important matter this question of children of God is, and our position here as children, because the name of God is bound up with His children.

**EuR** The note tells us that the word for 'children' does not imply what is diminutive; they are full-grown persons.

**AJG** It is just that they are persons of the family. It is not a diminutive expression, but those who belong to a certain family and therefore take on the characteristics of the One who has begotten them.

**APCL** And is the use of the word 'now' in verse 2 to stimulate our hearts that the present time is the time when we are privileged to fill out this position of children?

**AJG** Yes, I am sure that is important. I think perhaps it is not sufficiently realised that when sin came into the world by means of Satan, the devil succeeding with man, what was in contest was the nature of God. He instilled a lie as to God in the mind of the woman, and that really became the point of contest from then onwards. It was question as to whether God was true or not, and that is what is taken up in the children of God; they are here to vindicate God in His nature and moral character.

**MPS** Is that seen in Deuteronomy 32: 5, where it says, "They have dealt corruptly with him; Not his children's is their spot."

**AJG** That is, their distinctive features were not those of God. Their spot, I suppose, would indicate some distinctive feature that marked them, but it was not of God, as it should have been. It says, "They have dealt corruptly with him - Not his children's is their spot" (or 'blemish') - "A crooked and perverted generation!" So that they were misrepresenting the God whom they belonged to and should have represented.

**HDT** Is that contrasted in Philippians 2: 15, where we have "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world"?

**AJG** Quite so.

**WSS** Would it help to refer to Romans 8: 21, "the creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

**AJG** That is very interesting; "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." We are children of God now, but we are to come out in glory as His sons.

**WSS** The creature itself is to be set free.

**AJG** Quite so.

**AWR** We have the expression in Genesis 1, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Does this thought in John involve this matter of likeness?

**AJG** It does, I think it involves both. 'Image' is representation, and 'likeness' means that the representation is a true representation; that is, that it is like

God. You might have a representative who was not exactly like the person he represented, but the divine thought is that the representation should be a *true* representation, and therefore it is image and likeness.

**Ques** Would that be seen in the end of the book of Malachi, in the day of breakdown, that they were the children of God?

**AJG** What are you referring to, please?

**Ques** "Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another," Malachi 3: 16.

**AJG** Well, that is their public character, that they feared Jehovah. That is taken account of, and "a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name."

**PL** The thought of 'children' is unique to this dispensation. It does not go into eternity, does it?

**AJG** No, I think not, although I suppose what we are as children, as born of God, underlies every other position we come into.

**PL** Surely.

**JAP** Is that why the Lord is not referred to as a child?

**AJG** You mean, as a child of God?

**JAP** Yes.

**AJG** No. He is not referred to as a child of God. He was, of course, seen here as a little child, cared for by His mother, and so on.

**LF** Is this reference to children, that we are looking at in these opening verses, an appeal to the affections, so that John later on in this chapter could use the word again as appealing to them to maintain all that belongs to the children of God?

**AJG** Yes, and especially these features of righteousness and love, which are the two great features that this chapter stresses; righteousness first and then love. I do think it helps to see that as soon as sin came into the world God came into testimony in that two-fold character of righteousness and love, in the coats of skin, and that was the testimony that Cain and Abel were tested by.

**GCG** Do these features stand over against those of lawlessness and hatred that the enemy brought in at the outset, and consequently the ruin of man? I was thinking of the importance of our encouraging ourselves with these features of righteousness and love in view of the fact that they stand over

against the terrible features of lawlessness and hatred which the enemy brought in.

**AJG** I am sure that is important, and that is why I suggested reading those few verses in Genesis 4. Those verses stress that Abel was a brother, as though as soon as God had given the testimony in the coats of skin, then the first son of Adam and Eve - Cain - is born, and then immediately it says, "And she further bore his brother Abel." God gave him a brother. That is to say, the testimony was to work out in results in the circle of the brethren. If Cain had received the testimony to righteousness, he would also have been impressed with the testimony to love, and that would have expressed itself towards his brother. But he rejected the testimony of righteousness and the result is that he got no impression of love, and when his brother maintained the truth, instead of love coming into evidence in Cain, hatred came into evidence.

**JMcD** Are the coats of skin seen in the epistle to the Romans in connection with the righteousness and love of God?

**AJG** They are seen, I think, in the righteousness of God especially. But we know that underneath the establishment of righteousness lay love, because it was established by the death of God's own Son.

**RGB** Are not both righteousness and love abiding features?

**AJG** They are.

**RGB** I was thinking of the scripture, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness"; then we know that love is an abiding feature, because God is love.

**AJG** Quite so. I am sure that is important. It says in Isaiah 53 (that great chapter that speaks of the sufferings of Christ) "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant instruct many in righteousness; and *he* shall bear their iniquities." It is a striking word, that He instructs the many in righteousness, but He Himself bears their iniquities. The instruction in righteousness thus carried with it instruction in love; there was the testimony to love.

**GCS** Is righteousness connected with the throne? It says, "Thy throne, O God, is to the age of the age, and a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," and the throne is carried through to Revelation 21.

**AJG** Yes; that is right, and love is connected with the nature of God.

**EJH** Where do you bring in purity, as in verse 3, to link on with righteousness and love? Would you help us on that too?

**AJG** Well, "every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure." I think that is brought in just as a stimulus to us at the present time, in view of our testimony being strengthened and not weakened. We understand that we shall see Jesus "as he is," not as He was, but "as he is," and having this hope in Him we purify ourselves.

**APCL** Is it important to see that that "in him" is in the One that is to be manifested, which is in the glorious One?

**AJG** Exactly.

**WC** Purification would be seen in Enoch, would it not?

**AJG** It would. I was thinking that Enoch illustrates one who is in the enjoyment of eternal life.

**ANG** Would it also be seen in the gospels? In Matthew righteousness is stressed in detail, and in John love is stressed, where one brother finds another for the working out of these things.

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**AH** Does Peter help us at all as to this practical matter of purifying himself? He speaks in chapter 1 of his first epistle of "obedience to the truth," doing that for our souls, and then goes on to speak about loving.

**AJG** Well, it says, "we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see as he is." We must be like Him in order to see Him as He is. Then it says, "every one that has this hope in him," that is, in Christ, "purifies himself, even as *he* is pure." The point is, have we got it as a hope or not; are we carrying, as a hope in our hearts, the thought "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"?

**JMcK** It becomes a great leverage in the soul.

**AJG** That is the point.

**GAL** And if we are going to be like Him in the glory, we want to be like Him now.

**AJG** That is it. But then, do we want to see Him as He is? In order to see Him as He is, we must be like Him.

**JD** Would the gospel of Matthew have a bearing on this? It begins "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ," then we have the Lord's words at His baptism, "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," and then in chapter 5 He speaks of those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and says, "Blessed the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God."

**AJG** Well, that is so. It is just presented from a different standpoint perhaps. Here what is prominent is God. God in testimony in His children. I think it helps to keep that in mind.

**WSS** With regard to verse 3, it does not say, He that has this hope in Him *ought* to purify himself.

**AJG** No. It raises the question, therefore, not whether we are purifying ourselves, but whether we have got the hope, whether we have got it in Him, in our hearts.

**WSS** It would be a necessary, we might say inevitable, result.

**AJG** Yes.

**APCL** Does the use of the word 'know' in verse 2, which is for 'inward knowledge,' mean that it is an inward matter? It is not what we know academically, but what we know inwardly?

**AJG** Quite so. It goes on to speak about the one who practises sin, that it is practising lawlessness. He says, "And ye know" (again the same word - 'knowing inwardly') "that *he* has been manifested that he might take away our sins"; that is, in a practical sense - "and in him sin is not."

**AHG** Could you say how we purify ourselves?

**AJG** By the disallowance, in the Spirit's power, of what is contrary to Christ.

**WWM** Would you say a word in regard of hope. In Romans 8 it says we are "saved in hope."

**AJG** Hope is something that you look forward to, something you have as an expectation in your heart. I think this challenges us as to whether this is so with us, that we have really as a hope in us the hope of being like Christ in order to see Him as He is.

**JEP-W** It says in Proverbs 10: 28, "The hope of the righteous is joy."

**AJG** Well, to have this hope, in Christ, of being like Him in order to see Him as He is, would certainly produce joy in the heart. I think we might leave it at that, as to whether it really is a hope in our hearts.

**TJG** I would like to ask as to purifying himself, and the remark that it is almost an inevitable result. Subsequently, in answer to an enquiry, you said it is a disallowance of what is opposite to the Spirit. Can we have that cleared? Is it an inevitable result, or is there something we have to do?

**AJG** We have to do it, of course. But then if we have really got Christ in our hearts, and the desire to see Him as He is, and the knowledge that we must

be like Him in order to see Him as He is, there will be this working in us by the Spirit. It does not come to pass automatically, like autumn leaves falling from a tree, but certain energy is needed on our part; but then the energy is produced by the effect in us of the hope.

**APCL** In that sense it becomes characteristic of that kind of person.

**AJG** Quite so.

**HDT** Does it not involve our going on with the Lord in His present position?

**AJG** It does indeed.

**ABP** In Romans 5 the thought of hope is immediately followed by the present activity of the Spirit shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts. In Romans 8 the subject of hope is immediately followed by the necessity for the Spirit's intercession for us, and, following upon that, the searching of our hearts, "he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit." Does that indicate how substantial this thing becomes in our souls?

**AJG** I am sure it does, and that helps greatly.

**RJW** Would Romans 15 follow on what has just been said? "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

**AJG** Yes, quite so. God is the God of hope.

**CH** Does this verse not so much deal with the how, as the fact?

**AJG** That is it.

**WC** Would what you referred to last night link on with it? The city of pure gold, as pure glass, gives the full result there in what is substantial?

**AJG** Quite so. I think it is very interesting that it says, "even as *he* is pure." That is, in the Lord we have in a Man what is absolutely according to God, for He is God; and therefore the result of having this hope in our souls, the hope in Christ, is that we take on similar features. It results in the formation of the city - pure gold.

**LF** That is, there is moral correspondence to Christ. The children are marked by that.

**AJG** Yes. Moral correspondence to Christ, because Christ is the exact expression of God.

**AWGT** Has not Mr. Darby connected purity with light? I was thinking that light is very intimately linked with this thought of purity.

**AJG** Quite so. Light makes everything manifest that is impure, and therefore it would be excluded by the light.

**PL** In regard to the city, referred to as "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is this correspondence to Christ here underlying the whole testimonial position now and in the coming age in relation to the setting forth of God? Is it characteristically God's city?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. I think it is most stimulating and important to see that God has entered into the contest Himself. He has really come out in the display of Himself in righteousness and love, and that is to beget those who are formed in these features. Eventually the full result of it will be seen in the city.

**Ques** Does wisdom's voice enter into all this? It says in Proverbs 8: 20, "I walk in the path of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures."

**AJG** Hence our position in an evil scene is all intended to work out in the furtherance of what God is doing in us. The practical day-to-day exercises in business life and so on, requiring the diligent pursuit of what is right in the sight of God, in the fear of God, all tend towards the further development in us of righteousness as a practical matter.

**WSS** Is not what we have been saying largely the question of where we are dwelling in our affections? The unction teaches to abide in Him, and John says, "now, children, abide in him," and again in verse 6 of this chapter, "Whoever abides in him ... " In John 1 they wanted to know where the Lord abode, and it says, "they abode with him that day." Does not that enter into all this?

**AJG** It does. So we know that Cain, after rejecting the testimony that God rendered to him, and murdering his brother, started the world, but then in Genesis 5, God starts over afresh. He starts afresh with Adam, and then Seth, who takes the place of Abel, and so on. They are moving apart from the world morally; they are moving on the life line; and that culminates, in the seventh from Adam, in Enoch, who walked with God. He really was in the enjoyment of eternal life, entering into the life of God, you might say, as walking with Him.

**EJH** Could you connect it with what was said yesterday, about abiding in God?

**AJG** Yes, I think you could. I think you could say that of Enoch, undoubtedly.

**ALRT** Would he be one who was on the line of purifying himself? I was thinking of the way he is referred to in Hebrews 11, where it says that "faith is the substantiating of things hoped for."

**AJG** Well, yes. Quite so. In Genesis he is presented, not so much as in the line of faith, I think, as in the line of life. The fifth chapter of Genesis is the great line of life.

**ABP** And in his walk does he establish a way which contrasts with the way of Cain?

**AJG** Exactly, and that is set out in that generation in chapter 5.

**WJ** Would you say a word as to the family secrets as regards the Lord? It speaks of Him, even as He walked, as He is pure, as He is righteous. Are they family secrets, and all seen in the Lord?

**AJG** I think that shows that the children of God, as governed by the truth as we have it here, keep Christ before them. The One who is from the beginning is constantly kept before our hearts, because He is the One in whom what God is, in His nature and moral character, is learned. There is a certain begetting effect in us. The seed operates, so to speak, and begets what is according to it, as we take account of what God is as He shines out in Christ.

**CH** We prove ourselves to be a wholly right seed, in that sense.

**AJG** That is it.

**FCH** In verse 8 we have the reference to the Son of God undoing the works of the devil. Is that not very happily seen in the scripture that has been quoted from John 1, in contrast to the two brothers in the Old Testament? Is there not the manifestation of righteousness in chapter 1 of John's gospel, the walking by the Lamb of God; then following that we have two brothers, and then the concern of one was to find his own brother and to bring him to Jesus.

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**AWP** I want to ask you if what we get in Hebrews 1, where it refers to God bringing His firstborn into the habitable world, and the statement that He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, bears on what you have before you in regard of the generations and the habitable world, this world in which we find ourselves, and the working out of it. When it has accomplished its purpose it will be set aside.

Does that bear on what you have in mind in regard of the generations?

**AJG** I would not connect the thought of generation with the firstborn. I would connect the thought of the firstborn there with what we have in Psalm 89, "And as to me, I will make him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." That is, it is the thought of personal dignity and pre-eminence, I think.

**RHS** Would the generations in Luke 3 have a bearing on what is before us? Everything is traced back to God, and Seth and Enoch come in on that line.

**AJG** Yes, I suppose so.

**EJB** Is lawlessness the great challenge practically to all this?

**AJG** Quite so, it is. Lawlessness is a challenge to God and His rights, and brings in what is offensive to His nature.

**GRC** While we can make applications as to the past, is it important to keep in mind what has been said, that the children of God are unique to this dispensation? It bears on what you have said, that the full testimony as to what God is has come out now, and that has begotten children.

**AJG** Quite so. We can see in Genesis that God was foreshadowing these things, and illustrating the truth for us, but we have to come to this dispensation to see the full substance of the thing, because there are those now who have been begotten by the testimony of God in Christ.

**WD** Does John in his ministry help us in a special way to name things?

**AJG** Yes, he helps us to identify them as to whether they are of God or whether they are of the devil. There is no middle way with John.

**WD** Has not the history of the testimony arrived at a time now when we should name things and name them plainly?

**AJG** I do think that. That is confirmed in the last chapter of Revelation where it says, "The time is near. Let him that does unrighteously do unrighteously still; and let the filthy make himself filthy still; and let him that is righteous practise righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." So that, as you say, the time has come when things have got to be either the one thing or the other.

**APT** Cain is the only one named in this epistle. It is rather striking in regard to our brother's remark; the thing is named.

**AJG** Quite so. And he initiates a way, what Scripture speaks of as "the way of Cain," Jude 11.

**WCP** Is it striking that the comment here, that Cain's works were wicked, seems to allude to the part he took in the service of God?

**AJG** Quite so, what have you in mind in that?

**WCP** I was only just commenting on it. All that we are told about Cain is that he brought an offering and God was not pleased with it, and John, in naming

things as we have been reminded, says that his works were wicked and those of his brother were righteous.

**AJG** Well, the works were wicked, because he ignored the testimony that God had given. He ignored the testimony to righteousness and love and brought an offering that bore no reference to the testimony that God had given, which was the light that governed the situation, but he ignored it. It is therefore an important thing for us to see that we fully recognise and embrace the light that governs the moment.

**CH** Things are rightly named as their origin is understood.

**AJG** I am sure that helps.

**CH** It says here, "not as Cain was of the wicked one." Is it not a question of derivation?

**AJG** It is.

**ACSP** How far does what you have just said bear on the question of the light of the moment as to the knowledge of God in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and any reserves as to responding to that in the service of God?

**AJG** It bears on it very much. The light for the moment must govern us in our approach to God, and the approach to God must take character from the light which governs the moment. If there has been a development in the recovery of the truth and further light is now shining, then we must take it on and see that our service God-ward is coloured by it, otherwise we are failing to respond to the truth as God presents it.

**JSE** Is that the link between purifying himself and the matter of light?

**AJG** I think it is; go on, please.

**JSE** Well, I thought that this matter of purifying one's self involves that the light is allowed not only to break in, but to have its way. One thus relinquishes all that is in the way in one's self in order to go on with what is moving?

**AJG** Quite so.

**PL** The brother-hater here is the God-hater, is he not?

**AJG** Exactly.

**PL** The divine nature in the saints is what God is in love. If therefore one is at issue with one's brother, one is at issue with God, is he not?

**AJG** Quite so. Abel was not against Cain; we may gather that Abel loved Cain, because God tells Cain that Abel's desire was towards him. Abel was not

against Cain, the only thing that provoked Cain's enmity was that Abel was standing for the truth and approaching God as governed by the light for the moment.

**AMcG** It has just been said that love is God's nature, but is it not true that both love and light are God's nature? If we are not governed by the light, will love have any room or liberty?

**AJG** Well, I think the thought of light, as involved in this matter of sin and how it is to be met, really comes in in connection with righteousness. When God made coats of skin, He brought light as to what He is Himself to bear upon the whole situation and He exposed it in its sinfulness. At the same time as He exposed it, He judged it perfectly, but in judging it He shone in love. I am taking, of course, the meaning of the coats of skin as we understand it. Light shone in the way that righteousness was met and the light of love shone as well. What remains is the impression of love, but also the impression of righteousness, and we are to be formed in those two things, righteousness and love. It is really the combination, as you say, of light and love.

**AMcG** Mr. Darby has made plain that righteousness is an attribute of God, and you were referring last night to purity and light in the heavenly city and the fact that purity is getting as near to the thought of light and the nature of God as we can.

**AJG** Well, that is true, and righteousness as an attribute really flows out of what God is.

**JAP** I would like some help on what has been said that the children of God only come in in this dispensation. Are not the children of Israel in the past dispensation and again in the future, in some sense, the children of God?

**AJG** I think the full thought of children of God can only be applied to this dispensation. It says in John 1, "who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God." I do not think, as far as I know, you get the thought of being born of God applied to any other dispensation.

**JAP** What about Ezekiel 36: 25 - 28?

**AJG** That goes a long way, but it does not say,

Ye shall be my children, does it? You could not say that they were born of God, as far as I understand it. I think being born of God applies to this dispensation.

**PL** Begotten of the revelation?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**EJM** Is it not important that as God has manifested Himself thus in this dispensation, His children should manifest the same features of His attributes?

**AJG** His attributes and His nature.

**HW** In that connection would you say that in the children of God righteousness and love are almost synonymous terms, so to speak? Righteousness and love mark them as being of that generation?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right. So it says, "Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." The circle of the brethren is where love is to express itself and be developed.

**HW** And that is a righteous thing for a child of God?

**AJG** It certainly is, exactly. The thing has come out in testimony in Christ and it is righteous that we should be formed by it.

**GRC** Is it interesting, at this point, that he addresses them as brethren? Earlier he addresses them as his children, and as God's children, but now he says, "Do not wonder, brethren," involving that we are in a circle where there is the opportunity to express the divine nature to the fullest of our capacity.

**AJG** Yes, that is so; he is bringing in the circle now. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

**JM** It says that Cain slew his brother, as Christ was slain, but it was on the line of love that Christ laid down His life for us.

**AJG** Well, that is interesting. Hatred shows itself in slaying, but love shows itself in laying down one's life, and that was seen pre-eminently in Christ.

**AAB** In John 8, in the two stoopings of the Lord, would there be the testimony of love and of righteousness? That being refused, did the spirit of Cain manifest itself against the Lord personally?

**AJG** Yes, quite so. Hatred rises to its height in that chapter, does it not, in that they take up stones to stone Him.

**JMcM** Would you say a word about verse 9, "Whoever has been begotten of God does not practise sin, because his seed abides in him." Is the evidence of his being begotten of God there?

**AJG** That is important. We should take account of what we are, the seed to which we belong; it says, "his seed abides in him." The apostle is speaking of things abstractly and absolutely, and stating that the one who has been begotten of God does not practise sin. Obviously God's seed, that which is

begotten of God, cannot have anything to do with sin. Hence all this is challenging to us as to how far we are identifying ourselves in our thoughts and outlook with what we are as of God, and how far we are repudiating and refusing, in the Spirit's power, everything else.

**EJH** And so the Spirit is mentioned in the last verse of the chapter, to confirm that?

**AJG** Quite so, "Hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given to us."

**JMcD** Would you say a word about the frequent occurrence of the expression "practise"? We have "practise sin," and "practise righteousness."

**AJG** Our practice is what is characteristic of us, and our practice is that in which the seed, which we belong to, should show itself.

**WSS** Would you say a word about verse 16?

**AJG** That is a very important verse, and one which we need constantly to keep before us, because love is what God is looking for, and if I have not love I am nothing. The city is being formed and it is being formed substantially in love. But then we have to learn love, "Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us." It is a wonderful expression, "*he* has laid down his life for us"; the emphasis is on the "He."

**WSS** I was thinking of that, "he has laid down his life for us" and our apprehension of that by the Spirit would be the power for the next part of the verse, would it not?

**AJG** Yes, it becomes a moral obligation - "we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives." It is a moral obligation resulting from our apprehension of the way love has shown itself in Christ.

**WSS** Would you say it is the result of being engaged with the object?

**AJG** Quite so. But then the love that Christ gave expression to in laying down His life is divine love; it is what God is. That is the length to which God would go; He has gone to that length in Christ.

**ABP** And did that cover a period, rather than simply (when I say "simply" I say it guardedly) the cross? From the mount of Transfiguration and indeed before that, it says, "From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go away to Jerusalem, and suffer ... and be killed, and the third day be raised," Matthew 16: 21.

**AJG** Quite so. Then the actual experiences of the cross, and the testing at the hands of men that the Lord was subjected to, only brought out how absolute

was the love in which He was laying down His life for us. Nothing could turn Him from it.

**WS** And is there something peculiarly pleasing and attractive to this thought of laying down His life? I was thinking of that word in John 10, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again"?

**AJG** Yes, exactly. Then there is also the next verse, where it says, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself." It is a most striking and touching word, "I lay it down of myself."

**AHG** Does this go beyond the Old Testament law that "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? Is this a feature that is really the substance of Christianity?

**AJG** It is. Of course, in Christianity, in the power of the Spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled, but then this goes beyond it really.

**RGB** Is that kept before us livingly, week by week, in the Lord's supper, and is the Lord's supper not only to be for us the entrance to the service of God, but to keep our affections in living freshness, so that we are marked by the activity of love towards one another?

**AJG** Yes, I am sure of that.

**ABP** Is this a characteristic matter, rather than being a martyr? Paul could say, "But I make no account of my life as dear to myself."

**AJG** I am sure it is. It is not many believers nowadays that are called to be martyrs, but then love would express itself in characteristically laying down your life for the brethren over a long period, over the whole of your life indeed.

**CH** Does it not practically mean that we live for them?

**AJG** It does, exactly.

**APCL** Verse 17 being brought in as connected with that is a very practical matter, is it not?

**AJG** It is, exactly.

**APCL** It does not say, 'Whoso may have the world's substance, and see his brother having need and does not raise it in the care meeting,' it says "see his brother having need, and shut up his bowels from him." Is not that a matter that might exercise us as having the world's substance?

**AJG** Exactly. God orders different circumstances, that some have this world's substance and others are needy, in order that there should be the development of love among the saints.

**APCL** On an individual basis as well as collective, would you not say?

**AJG** Indeed I would. This verse shows that we keep our eyes open in regard of temporal conditions, and then in chapter 5 we keep our eyes open in regard of spiritual conditions, so that if we see a brother sin we ask for him. It is thus contemplated that in our relations with one another, we keep our eyes open as regards both temporal circumstances and spiritual conditions.

**EJH** Does not God often change our circumstances to give opportunity for all to give expression to this kind of thing?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**ECL** Does the reference to persuading our hearts before him link up with this question as to how we are in these practical matters which have been referred to?

**AJG** I think so. I think we persuade our hearts before God by seeing that we are ourselves governed by the truth in a practical way. If we are not, it shows that we do not really appreciate the truth.

**WSS** So in verse 18 it says, "let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth."

**AJG** You mean that the deed is put first?

**WSS** Yes. I was thinking what our brother said in regard to the bowels being shut up, the deeds have to come into it, but then there is the truth too?

**AJG** Quite so. So that what we do is to be governed by truth; it is to be genuine. You do not show kindness in the hope of ingratiating yourself in the minds of particular ones or anything of that sort, or gaining undue influence over them; Absalom did that, but here it is "in deed and in truth." All that we do is to be governed by truth.

**WSS** That is what I was thinking; the deeds are to be governed by the truth. The truth is what is before us, as being lovers of the truth.

**AJG** Quite so.

**JPH** Could I ask for just a little help to distinguish between our hearts condemning us and our consciences?

**AJG** The heart is the seat of the affections. What would you think about that?

**JPH** I think so; I do see a great difference. Perhaps our affections need a little stimulating, but if we realise they do, we need not be discouraged. Can we get to God and have them stimulated, so that these things are freely flowing among us?

**AJG** I am sure of that. In a sense there can be nothing greater for God than to see what He is in His own nature expressing itself in His children. He has set us together for that very purpose, that it might express itself and be developed, but that is a matter of the heart. An unconverted person has a conscience, but it is only a Christian that has a heart that is affected by divine love.

**AHG** Why does it say, "God is greater than our heart"?

**AJG** Well, we may attempt to conceal from ourselves that our heart is condemning us, but then God is greater than our heart. I think it is brought in in order to help us to face things in the sense that nothing can be concealed from God.

**AH** Would you say a word as to the expression John uses here in verse 19, "And hereby we shall know that we are of the truth"? He tells us elsewhere that we are of God. I wondered what was the force of that expression?

**AJG** The truth is what is brought into the world in opposition to Satan's lie, and that is an important matter, the truth as to God that is in the world in testimony. It is not only in verbal testimony, but it is in the children of God and the way they act. Hence if we answer to these things and are moving in love, in deed and in truth, we know that we are of the truth.

**EuR** Is not God the great source of all love and giving? "We love because *he* has first loved us."

**AJG** Yes. I think it is a great help, in considering these writings of John, to bear in mind that what is in contest in the world is the truth, the truth as to God. That has been the point in contest ever since sin came into the world, and we, as children of God, are here as of the truth and to maintain testimony to the truth.

**EuR** Right through this epistle God would involve the three Persons, as you have been saying, and so in the first verse of Genesis. We want to be very clear about that, do we not?

**AJG** That is quite true, but I think if Scripture speaks of God we can leave it at that. We do not always want to analyse as to whether the three Persons are involved or not. God is God, and the truth is presented as to God.

**ECM** Is this not in view of our being brought into a position of fixity and restfulness before God? I was thinking of what is said in the last verse of the chapter, "And he that keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given to us."

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**JAP** Is there any difference between being "born of God" and "born of the Spirit," as the Lord speaks of it?

**AJG** "Born of the Spirit," has in view what is spirit. It seems to me that "born of God" is a very full thought.

**CWO'LM** Would you say just a word, please, on "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" as being His commandment?

**AJG** That is the testimony that has come to us and it is that that we have to believe. We are to be characterised by it, believing on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. What have you in mind?

**CWO'LM** On the face of it, it seems such a simple statement, does it not, for presumably as believers that would mark us. I wondered whether there was something specific in the expression "the name of his Son Jesus Christ"?

**AJG** I think it is that we are to be characteristically believers. It is not something that we say we believed so many years ago, but we are characteristically believers "on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." It brings in the full testimony of divine love in Christ and the way it has come out to us.

**CWO'LM** Does that govern, therefore, the rest of the verse?

**AJG** Exactly, "and that we love one another." It is a commandment.

**WmH** And does not the testimony come to us authoritatively in the thought of commandment?

**AJG** It is a command that we should believe. We should be marked by that and we should love one another. The great tendency, among many believers nowadays, is to hold things secretly, but not to maintain these things publicly, and to go along with the drift of the world. But we are commanded to be believers on "the name of his Son Jesus Christ" and to love one another, so that there should be a testimony maintained in truth to what God is.

**EJH** Continuous believing then would mean continuously with the truth?

**AJG** Yes.

**ABP** Do verses 19 and 20 give us the means of self-analysis to determine whether we are really in all this or not?

**AJG** I am sure they do and it is intended that they should provoke that analysis, do you not think?

**ABP** I wondered if Paul in a way gives us a similar line, when he says, "For I am conscious of nothing in myself; but I am not justified by this but he that examines me is the Lord," 1 Corinthians 4: 4.

**AJG** Quite so. Then another thing is that if our heart does not condemn us we have boldness towards God and whatsoever we ask we receive from Him. That seems to be another feature of our position here in the testimony, that as answering to the truth, and having boldness towards God as a consequence, we can ask. It is as though God will delight to do things in answer to the requests of His children. He will do more, so to speak, in answer to our requests than by what we do ourselves.

**LF** Do all these things that we have just been speaking of really belong to the substantiality of Christianity which you drew our attention to earlier? Is that how it is shown and known?

**AJG** That is it.

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (4)

*1 John 4: 1 - 21*

**AJG** The remark was made this morning that this chapter was full of the thought of God, and we have in it the thought of our abiding in God, and God in us, a certain fixedness being contemplated which is very blessed. We have also, in the beginning of the chapter, the efforts of the enemy through false teaching, to set aside the truth, and then the means we have, in the Spirit of God, and also in subjection to the apostolic teaching, to discern and reject everything that is false. The first paragraph ends with "we," that is an apostolic "we," "We are of God; he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us." That is a second test, we might say, of the teachings that are abroad, as to whether or not they conform to the apostolic teaching. The first power for proving teaching and what the teaching confesses is in the Spirit of God, and it concerns the confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh"; that really is the essence, you might say, of the truth, and the point at which all that is false in the world is exposed. "Jesus Christ come in flesh" involves, I apprehend, the truth as to the deity of Christ, for no one, who is not God, could be spoken of as "coming in flesh." It also involves the truth of His manhood, that He who is God became Man and is a Man, and it also involves, as a corollary, that the first man, man in flesh, is set aside, for there was no object in the Son of God coming into the world if God could have made anything of the first man. That is important, because, if present-day religious teaching is considered, or if the views of leaders of thought either in the political world or the social world are considered, you will find that no one recognises or acknowledges the complete ruin of man; all is based on the assumption that there is some good in man which can be worked upon, but the truth cuts at the root of that, and that is involved in this confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh."

**AH** In verse 1 it speaks of "false prophets" but in verse 2, it says "every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God," and in verse 3, "every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God." Why is it spirit and not persons?

**AJG** Because persons are the mouthpiece of spirits - either the Spirit of God, or some other spirit that is not of God. Teaching is either true and of the Spirit of God, or else it is opposed to the truth and another spirit lies behind it, hence the need for detection of what is of God and what is not of God.

**HW** So would you say this confession is not like that in Romans 10 - where we have confessing with the mouth; but it is the whole attitude and bearing of the

person?

**AJG** I think when it comes to the Spirit and the doctrine connected with the Spirit, it really is what is the essence of the thing. It may be clothed with a great deal that is deceptive, such as the quotation of Scripture and all that kind of thing, as we usually find false teachings are, but the point is to arrive at the real essence of it and what it thinks in regard of Christ, and what it thinks in regard of man.

**LF** This scripture disposes of anything in the way of compromise in regard to the truth, does it not? It is of God or it is not of God; it would allow no admixture at all in regard to this matter?

**AJG** No exactly.

**EJH** Would you say that it is a comfort and a stay to us all that as we rely upon the Spirit there is no need for anyone whatever to be deceived by anything that is in the world?

**AJG** No, quite so. That reminds us of what we had yesterday in connection with the unction, but it is striking that it says the non-confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh" is "that power of the antichrist." That shows the real character of it, that all that is antichristian is built up on the non-confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh."

**EJH** Yet the believer has far greater power than all the power that is arraigned against him?

**AJG** Quite so.

**ECM** Would the discernment you speak of be the result of having the senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil?

**AJG** Yes, that is necessary in order to get the gain of the Spirit of God, and I think this simple test, "Jesus Christ come in flesh" (if the import of it is understood) is extremely important. It involves the truth as to Christ in a very full way, the absolute truth as to His deity and His true manhood, and then what is its import, that every other man is superseded.

**MPS** Is there any difference between not confessing "Jesus Christ come in flesh" and denying the Son in the second chapter? I was thinking that non-confession might refer to matters which are not clear on the face of them. Denying the Son would be clear perhaps to all, but are we certain as to this confession?

**AJG** I think that helps, that denying the Son is something positive and would immediately be apparent to a true believer, but this is a question of

discernment, as you say, because much that is false is clothed with that which is outwardly attractive, in the sense that the Scriptures are brought in and that kind of thing; hence the importance of really discerning what the essence of the teaching is.

**PHH** The thought of deception is found in the second epistle, where it says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh - this is the deceiver and the antichrist." Do you think those three things put together, the denying and then the power and then the deceiver, or deception, really expose the whole of modern religion in that sense?

**AJG** I think so. One has often been impressed with the circumstances surrounding the taking of Christ by those with Judas; they were in league with, and sent by, the chief priests and scribes. It says for instance in Mark 14, "the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might seize him by subtlety and kill him." Those are the religious leaders, and they are moving with subtlety with a view to getting rid of Christ, and that is exactly the character of modern religious teaching. While it takes on the name of Christ, it is attaching Christ and the Christian teaching to the first man, with a view eventually to getting rid of the need of Christ altogether, so that it is antichristian in its character and effect.

**JH** Will you please enlarge a little more on the thought of "Jesus Christ come in flesh" as being the evidence of the Spirit's operation in a person, as over against the popular religion of today, which confesses that Jesus lived a man here, as just an example to be followed in the power of the flesh?

**AJG** I would connect the expression "Jesus Christ come in flesh" with what we have in chapter 1 of John's gospel, "the Word became flesh." That is to say it is the action of a divine Person; it is God Himself entering into manhood, and the popular religion of today based on following the example of Jesus as a perfect Man here, in the power of the flesh, does not confess that, does it?

**JH** No, quite, I was thinking of the movements of God into manhood, "Jesus Christ come in flesh" being with the view of the removal of that man completely.

**AJG** Quite so. There was no need for God to introduce another man in the Person of His Son, if anything could be produced for the pleasure of God by the first man. The coming in of the Son of God "Jesus Christ come in flesh" - was evidence that the time had come in God's ways, and it was necessary too, and in fact essential, for the first man to be displaced and removed.

**ABP** Should we consider also the mystery in the name of Jesus and its intimate link with Emmanuel in Matthew?

**AJG** I am sure that is important, the very name itself involving His deity.

**ABP** Jah the Saviour.

**AJG** Yes.

**PHH** Is this matter of the removal of the first order of man enlarged on somewhat by the Lord Himself in John 6, where He mentions several times His own flesh and His coming down?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. He is presenting Himself in the grace of His coming down from heaven as food for the believer. But then when it comes to appropriating the food we find that He changes the figure from bread to eating His flesh and drinking His blood, that is appropriating His death.

**PHH** And do we understand that in that death, alluded to in the flesh and the blood, we are to see the termination of the first order of man and, therefore, to open ourselves to the consideration of the order of Man that is in Christ?

**AJG** Yes, exactly. He took up flesh and blood condition in order, vicariously, to terminate it before God in His death and then to open up in Himself a new order of manhood beyond death.

**HDT** Does Paul approach that in 1 Corinthians 15 in the two titles he gives the Lord, "the second man, out of heaven" and "the last Adam"?

**AJG** I think so. I suppose "the second man, out of heaven" involves that the first man has been displaced in favour of the second, and "the last Adam" involves that finality has been reached.

**HDT** And He replaces the man that has been displaced by what takes character from Himself.

**AJG** Exactly.

**WWS** Does it in any way bear on the matter to say that when Paul met the evil spirit in Philippi he met it in the power of the name of Jesus Christ? I was thinking that there you had in principle the spirit of antichrist working, but do you think it was met by the confession of the name of Jesus Christ?

**AJG** Yes, that is good.

**RJW** In John 8, when it was a question of the Lord's Person, and they asked who He was, He said, "Altogether that which I also say to you," and just prior

to that the Lord says, "Unless ye shall believe that I am (he), ye shall die in your sins."

**AJG** That is a remarkable chapter, because in it we have the Lord speaking of Himself as "a man who has spoken the truth to you, which I have heard from God," and then He says, "Before Abraham was, *I* am," So that there is a remarkable combination in that chapter in the Lord's own words of the truth of His Person.

**AHG** Why does the apostle link up here this non-confession of Jesus Christ come in flesh with the power of the antichrist?

**AJG** Because that is just where the power of antichrist lies. The refusal to accept the necessity for the setting aside of man after the flesh, the first order of man, lies at the very base of all antichristian teaching.

**AHG** Would antichrist in that way be the displacement of Christ?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**EJH** In John 6 the Lord says, "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing - the words which *I* have spoken unto you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe." I was thinking of the setting aside of the first man in totality - how few are prepared to believe it.

**AJG** Exactly, I think it helps to see that the title "the Christ" is very exclusive. There are many antichrists, but there is only one Christ. So that the very title "the Christ" is exclusive of every other man; He is *the* anointed of God.

**ABP** Do you connect the removal of the first man with the second cry of Jesus on the cross, and in that sense does it make it a very feeling and precious matter to us?

**AJG** Exactly, I have no doubt, in one sense, that God felt it that man after the flesh had to be removed, do you not think? It says in regard to the condition of things just before the flood that "it grieved him in his heart." We perhaps do not enter into the feelings of God in regard of these matters, but then the grief that He would feel must be more than counter-balanced by the joy that is His now in having a Man of Christ's own order in His presence, and myriads partaking in His life and order by the Spirit.

**ECL** Do you think John enters into that when he addresses the saints as "Beloved" in this chapter? It is not 'brethren' or 'children' but "Beloved," Would it help us to see the likeness to Christ in them?

**AJG** It shows the feelings that are in the heart of the apostle in writing. We get this expression "Beloved" at least three times in the chapter.

**Ques** Do we see the spirit of antichrist in type in Absalom as he stole the hearts of the people?

**AJG** Yes, we do, and, of course, as we read in Revelation; antichrist has the appearance of a lamb but when he speaks he speaks as a dragon. We, therefore, have to be careful of deceptive appearances.

**HDT** Had you in mind, when you spoke about the chief priests and the scribes and the elders taking counsel by subtlety to take Jesus, that it was something deliberate? It is said of Absalom that the conspiracy grew stronger.

**AJG** Oh! it is deliberate; there is no doubt about that. So that evil spirits, that is, what is opposed to God, will lend themselves to it, to bring in systematised error. It has the appearance of what is Christian attached to it and the Scriptures brought forward out of their setting in order to support it, but it is all a subtle, deliberate intention to get rid of Christ.

**PL** So that the gates of hades, in Matthew 16, are seen operating after the glory of the Person of Christ is confessed, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

**AJG** Quite so. It is a most comforting thing that there is that here which is impregnable, which the gates of hades cannot prevail against, and it is great grace that we should have part in it.

**MPS** How are we to understand the expression, "every spirit," the first time it occurs, in verse 2?

**AJG** It is a question of what lies behind everything that is presented to us as teaching. If it is true, the Spirit of God lies behind it; if it is not true, another spirit lies behind it.

**MPS** Would it be seen in Paul saying that he served God in his spirit in the glad tidings of His Son?

**AJG** That would be Paul's own spirit, of course, and the feeling that accompanied his service, but in the actual ministry of Paul, the Spirit of God was behind it.

**ABP** When James and John suggested fire coming down from heaven, the Lord said, "Ye know not of what spirit ye are." Would that be like the gates of hades operating subtly to misrepresent the dispensation that Jesus had just committed Himself to?

**AJG** Just so. Reference has been made to the spirit in the young woman that followed Paul and Silas at Philippi. There was a semblance of truth in what she

said, "These men are bondmen of the Most High God, who announce to you the way of salvation," Acts 16: 17.

**GAL** Does it not touch the question of the revelation of God, "Jesus Christ come in flesh, "He came to reveal God. If that is denied, the revelation is denied, is it not?

**AJG** Quite so.

**ACSP** Was the evidence of one of these spirits at work in Peter, in Matthew 16, when the Lord had to say to him, "Get away behind me, Satan?

**AJG** Well, working through means of sentiment and natural feeling; but then that is not quite what we have in this chapter; this is definite teaching, doctrines.

**ACSP** I was really wanting some help as to how this matter of wrong teaching may come in amongst us, because it is evident that the enemy is trying to get in in different parts.

**AJG** Well, that is why everything has to be tested.

**WSS** I suppose this would link with Ephesians 4, "that we be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of *that* teaching which is in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning with a view to systematised error." Would this be the same thing in principle?

**AJG** It would.

**AJD** Would this be seen in the addresses to the assemblies in Revelation 2 and 3, in the expression "the synagogue of Satan"? Would that have this kind of thing in mind especially in the last days?

**AJG** Quite so. You mean that there is what has religious character that is definitely of Satan, opposed to the truth, I suppose that was largely Jewish tendencies, but the Lord exposes them as being of Satan.

**JSE** Do these remarks suggest to us that the power for trying the spirits only lies within the family circle?

**AJG** Well, that is true because it only lies in those who have the Spirit of God, who are born of God. But what have you in mind in saying that?

**JSE** I thought the writer was crediting the saints with ability on this line, and we are to put the ability into execution.

**AJG** Quite so. That is important. It is a question of overcoming, and maintaining the overcoming, and therefore maintaining the truth in sound teaching and in walk that is consistent with it.

**JSE** Is it not a fact that whilst much is made historically of the nativity, even amongst professing believers, this that you have referred to, "Jesus Christ come in flesh" is unknown, and people are led astray by the mere historical thoughts of the nativity?

**AJG** That is so, and it is sorrowful to see many believers affected by unsound teaching. Although at bottom they would not accredit what was basically unsound, they are, for the time being, often deluded by it.

**GAL** Is there not a very specious form of attack in the way of household visitations with literature, which sisters may have to meet on the doorstep? When these people are tested by the deity of Christ the whole thing is exposed, but there is a very subtle movement afoot, is there not, in the world on these lines?

**AJG** Quite so. That is the case, that often the sisters are confronted with this kind of thing in house-to-house visitation. We find that, of course, in the second epistle.

**JAP** Is not the final test the apostolic teaching, "He that knows God hears us"?

**AJG** Yes, it is; hence the great importance of following up the apostolic teaching. The early believers were marked by that; they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

**AWGT** What is the distinction between what we are speaking of and what Paul speaks of as profane, vain babblings which we are to shun?

**AJG** Well, they might not be exactly systematic teaching. Profane, vain babblings seems to refer a good deal to what may be just loose talking and a multitude of words with nothing in it. But this is systematic cleverness, instigated by the devil.

**WSS** In Ephesians 4 (if I may refer to it again, for it seems to link with this) we have that which comes from Christ as Head through the gifts by the Spirit, first, and then that ye be not as babes, and here we have the teaching also, as if we must be in the sphere of divine teaching from Christ by the Spirit if we are to be preserved from these insidious attacks on the truth.

**AJG** Quite so, and it is significant here that the apostle exposes all this as being of the world. "*They* are of the world; for this reason they speak as of the world, and the world hears them." The world has many different departments, and phases, you might say, but the basic feature of the world is that it is man's world, for the glory of man.

**WSS** And this would be particularly, to use your word, the religious department!

**AJG** Yes, and it is all of this principle, that it is for the exaltation of man.

**PL** Do you not think there is a call for a systematic and sequential teaching, that the mind may be bulwarked against these inroads of darkness?

**AJG** I think there is.

**PL** In temple enquiry, and the authority of the gifts too? It is an independent and insubject mind, is it not, that lays itself open to these attacks?

**AJG** Quite so, I think that is important. An element of insubjection with us, or any allowance of anything that is not right, exposes us to the enemy's attack, so I suppose that is why it is that the Lord in speaking to Peter called him Satan, and the trouble was that his mind was not on the things of God but on the things of man.

**WSS** It has impressed me very much for years that unless we are in the current of the Spirit's teaching at any given time we are bound to come under the influence of wrong teaching. Would you say that?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right.

**WC** Would that be confirmed by the fact that it says, "Hereby ye know the Spirit of God"? That is the Spirit objectively, is it not? Then it immediately says, "every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God." Does that mean that the Spirit is only here in connection with the identification with that order of man in the saints? He was here in relation to Christ, was He not, for the Lord says, "ye know him" in John 14? Now the word says, "ye know the Spirit of God."

**AJG** Well, the Spirit of God is supporting the truth as to Christ, His deity and His true manhood, and what the import of His having come into manhood is.

**ALRT** Are there two basic tests for us - the Person of Christ and the apostolic teaching? Is that what we see in this third section?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**JPH** In connection with what has just been said, would it be right to extend verse 6, "he that knows God hears us," to our day? Is there what is of the character of apostolic teaching, I mean authority in the ministry in our day, by which we are tested, and in heeding it we heed God?

**AJG** That is right in principle.

**JPH** I only meant in principle.

**AJG** The apostolic teaching remains as the basis of sound Christian knowledge, but, as you say, there is what is authoritative in the Spirit in the teaching that is given by gifts ministering in the Spirit.

**PL** And do you not think that these three-day meetings universally are divinely intended to furnish a sequential thesis of the truth, so that the saints become more established in it?

**AJG** I think that is so. If we are helped to maintain the attitude of enquiry in the temple we shall find that the truth does come out with some measure of authority.

**ABP** And is there not a need for the continuance of the special character of meetings such as is being held in this city now?

**AJG** I think there is, for that very reason, that it gets brethren together from over a wide area and it affords opportunity for the Spirit to open up the truth or confirm what is needed at the moment among the brethren.

**ABP** Some of us were a little concerned because we heard a report that this kind of meeting may be discontinued.

**AJG** I do not think there was any thought of discontinuing them. There was a thought as to whether they should or should not be held every year; that was as far as it went.

**ANG** In connection with the spirits, would Peter's personal experience help? When the links are clear, would an appeal to the Lord personally be effective? He said, "If it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the waters."

**AJG** Oh! That is so, undoubtedly.

**PHH** Do you see any significance in the use of the word 'temple' in the opening chapters of Samuel? We have been speaking about the temple. It was clearly the tabernacle, but it is called the temple. I wondered if the Spirit of God might be pointing to the need for enquiry in temple light in a day of poor things.

**AJG** Would you indicate the scripture you have in mind.

**PHH** The first chapter. It says, for instance, in verse 9, "Eli the priest sat upon the seat by the doorpost of the temple of Jehovah." There are other references in the early chapters, and then there is the suggestion, in the beginning of chapter 3, that "the word of Jehovah was rare in those days; a vision was not frequent." Would that in any way be a help to us, in getting to know the truth by enquiry in a poor day?

**AJG** I think it would. I think it is very striking that it comes in in that way, and that Samuel, who was designed to be the prophet to communicate the mind of God, is from his earliest days connected with the temple. It is called that, as though he is to learn from his earliest days the possibilities that lie in the temple for acquiring the knowledge of the mind of God.

**APCL** Would that be in a certain sense implied in verse 4, "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Would that in a certain sense imply the temple?

**AJG** You are linking it with the passage in Corinthians, "ye are temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you"?

**APCL** Yes.

**AJG** I think so.

**APCL** I was thinking of the seven sons of Sceva the Jew; they tried to overcome by knowing something that Paul preached, but they themselves were overcome and escaped naked. Do you think there is a need for us to be really living in the thing if we are to overcome these spirits?

**AJG** I am sure of that.

**PHH** And is it touching that John says, "Ye are of God," in verse 4, and then later says, in verse 6, "We are of God." Although one was the family setting and the other was the more apostolic setting, yet there is ability with the children to discern the spirits and to get the full advantage of *the Holy Spirit*, even in the midst of such antichristian workings?

**AJG** So that there is an affinity between the children of God and the truth of God, which the apostles bring out.

**PHH** Quite so.

**PL** And which such an occasion as this affords expression for?

**AJG** Quite so.

**PHH** It does seem extraordinary, does it not, that we should take this up, "Ye are of God," in verse 4, as applying to ourselves, and yet not hear what comes into that 6th verse, "Ye are of God," involves the children and the family, "We are of God" implies the hearing; that is, I suppose, as has been said, the attention to the ministry, and hearing means taking it on in obedience, does it not?

**AJG** It does, but, of course, the apostle here, and all through his epistle, is looking at things according to their true nature; so he does not contemplate

that any true believers do not hear the apostles. Alas! there may be those who do not pay attention to the apostolic teaching, but he says in verse 6, "he that knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us." He does not contemplate, I suppose, that a true believer would not pay attention to apostolic teaching.

**JTS** Are the apostle's positive remarks as to being begotten of God to be taken account of? I was thinking of what we have had already, "every one who practises righteousness is begotten of him," and then again, "every one that loves has been begotten of God," and then later we shall have, "every one that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." Is that what you are leading on to now? We have had the matter of righteousness, and of love, and now believing that Jesus is the Christ.

**AJG** Quite so. We might come on to the section from verse 7 now. "Let us love one another; because love is of God, and every one that loves has been begotten of God, and knows God." It is as though the first paragraph that we have been occupied with is just to preserve the integrity of the truth in the Christian circle. But then, that being preserved, and the saints being preserved from what is false, we have got to see that we go on with what is positive, what is really of God.

**AHG** Could you enlarge a little on this expression "and knows God."

**AJG** Do you not think that necessitates continuance, going on with God. We only know Him if we go on with Him, and go on with Him as prepared to be obedient to the truth as it comes to us.

**AHG** Is it the outcome of living communication or communion with God Himself?

**AJG** Yes, and seeing to it that whatever the knowledge of God requires in us in the way of walking in love, for instance, has its place with us.

**APCL** So that in Corinthians Paul has to say, "some are ignorant of God."

**AJG** Quite so. "I speak to you as a matter of shame," he says.

**APCL** I was somewhat interested to see that in verse 6 it is not 'he that is of God hears us' but "he that knows God hears us." He changes from "We are of God" to "he that knows God hears us."

Does not that involve that we give ourselves, in that sense, characteristically to know God?

**AJG** I think it should have that result. So that in what we had this morning there was the refusal of the truth by Cain, and then he goes and builds up a

world. Then God starts afresh in the beginning of Genesis 5 with those who are going on on the line of life, and the seventh from Adam is Enoch, who walks with God. It is as though, moving on that line in independence of the world and separation from it, what you have before you is to know God, and to have your part in what we might call "the life of God," walking with God.

**APCL** I was thinking that in contrast to that it is possible to allow ourselves to become built up in things which are really not *of* God, and do you think that dulls our capacity to hear?

**AJG** I am sure that is so. If we would seek grace to cultivate something of the reality of walking with God it would answer a great many questions that sometimes arise amongst us as to whether there is any harm in this or that, and so on. One has often been impressed with what Peter says of the Lord Jesus in John 6; he says, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast *words* of life eternal." What kind of thing did the Lord speak to the apostles about, all the time that they were companying with Him? "Words of life eternal" was what Peter and the other apostles heard who companied with Jesus, and that was really what they were going on with in spite of the failings that we see from time to time.

**EuR** You referred again to "the life of God." There was an exercise that a little further help as to that expression would be welcome.

**AJG** We get the expression in Ephesians 4. It says in verse 17, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye should no longer walk as the rest of the nations walk in the vanity of their mind,

being darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them." I have often thought of Enoch as walking with God; walking with God day by day for 300 years he would get a very good impression of what the life of God was - that is to say, what God's interests were, what He had before Him. God would let him into the secret of them. He would be entirely detached from the life of this world and would be in the enjoyment of eternal life. That is what we would develop in finding our life in things eternal. It is really the life of God; it is not Deity, of course, but it is a question of the interests of God - what God finds His life in, speaking reverently.

**EuR** Is it a creatorial thought that God's intelligent creature, man, should be in the gain of? It says in Acts, "in him we live and move and exist"?

**AJG** No, I do not think it is quite a creatorial thought, but what do you have in mind in saying that?

**EuR** Well, that it is derived from the Creator, and He sustains us in it.

**AJG** That is true, of course, but then I think "the life of God," as I understand the expression, and eternal life, which to my mind is very much linked with it, would go beyond that. It seems to me it would mean having a living interest in the world that God has before Him.

**GAL** Has it not been expressed in Christ as "the last Adam"? I mean does not that bring out especially the glory of Christ in relation to this great matter of life?

**AJG** That is life in the sense of what is communicated, is it not?

**GAL** Yes, but surely we enjoy what is communicated.

**AJG** That is true.

**HDT** Would that involve the development of tastes that are suited to God's presence and outlook?

**AJG** Yes, and the life of God would be His love and what His love has designed, and what He is going on with, so to speak. God is not static or inactive.

**PL** Has it not a testimonial bearing? Is not the life of God very much a life of sacrificing love in the presence of a scene of evil?

**AJG** Well, that is the form it takes at the present time.

**GAL** Is that not the force of verse 9, "Herein as to us has been manifested the love of God."

**APCL** But actually in verses 20 and 21 of that same chapter, Ephesians 4, there is a "but." "But ye have not thus learnt the Christ, if ye have heard him and been instructed in him according as the truth is in Jesus." Would that not be descriptively the life of God, for it occupied Jesus in His life?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**GRC** So would not the life of God at the present time be seen in "the new man, which according to God is created in truthful righteousness and holiness."

**AJG** Well, those would be the features that belong to it, but then it seems to me there are the interests themselves, I do not know whether you would agree.

**GRC** Yes, I would, but I wondered whether in the first instance the life of God involves the manifestation of God in His nature and attributes, and that would

lead on to what He moves in, as you say.

**AJG** Yes.

**PHH** Does Genesis 5 more or less set out the thought of the life of God? I think the names of some of these worthies mentioned suggest 'the majestic' and 'divine shining,' and Jared 'descending,' God coming down. Then Enoch, I suppose, is a man beginning to take all that in by walking with God, and then Methushelah as arriving at something, and Lemech, the overcomer. Is there something active about all this life of God, which is superior to anything here as we walk in the sphere of divine interests?

**AJG** I think that is right. So that that chapter, although it keeps on saying, "and he died," is actually the line of life. What it says of them is that they lived, and it is the line of life; it is over against the world that Cain built up, so that it is entirely apart from the world that is around us, and we find our life in what is of God.

**PHH** And in Noah it goes through.

**AJG** Quite so.

**EJH** Would some of those interests that belong to the life of God be expressed in what is said of Enoch in Jude, "Behold, the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads"?

**AJG** He would see the necessity for the judging of all that was existent in the world, in opposition to God, in order to introduce God's world publicly.

**EJH** I was thinking of the communications that he would have had in the walk with God.

**AJG** Yes.

**HAH** The Lord Jesus said to His parents, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?"

**AJG** Quite so. You might say there was the beginning of it there.

**WF** Would the expression in the epistles, "the things of God," and "the things of Jesus Christ," and "the things of the Spirit," convey some impression of the life of God?

**AJG** I should think that would be right.

**JAP** Would it not invariably mean some appreciation of Christ?

**AJG** Well, it must mean that, because He is the Centre of God's world, and the One who gives character to it.

**WC** Would not the whole tabernacle system be suggestive of the sphere, the life of God? There was constant movement there, in the bringing the sacrifices and so on, and the movement of the ark, toward another world, so to speak?

**AJG** Quite so. So that here, in verse 9, it is very touching that in the manifestation as to us of the love of God, what is in view is that we should live through Him, "that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Then there is the additional thought, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins." In both cases it is "his Son."

**WSS** In verse 9, it is "Herein *as to us*." In verse 10 there is no such reference. What would be the difference in the two thoughts?

**AJG** Well, in either case it is ourselves who are in mind, only it seems to me it is "as to us" in verse 9, because there is the great objective in mind that we might live through Him. It is life that God has in mind. But then in verse 10 it is a question of dealing with what lay in the way of our being brought into it, and love comes into expression in that.

**WSS** I wondered if God's pleasure in what was being secured for His own glory might be seen in verse 10, particularly. Would that be right?

**AJG** I should like help from the brethren, but it seems to me that the greater thought is in verse 9, "that we might live through him." Then verse 10 comes in as showing that because this great matter of sin was standing in the way, love came into expression in sending His Son as a propitiation for our sins.

**AHG** Would you say a little more as to "live through him"? Is that as having Christ before us objectively, or does it involve too His service towards us?

**AJG** Oh! I suppose it involves both, but the great point, I think, is "live" but "live through him." That would mean that we live in relation to God.

**RGB** Was not God's original thought, a scene in which there should be life and in which there should be those responding to Him livingly and substantially?

**AJG** Yes, I think so, and hence those early chapters in Genesis are so full of instruction. You get His meeting, in the coats of skin, all that had come in through sin, in principle, and then, when Cain has gone out and built a world in opposition to God, you get the great thought in chapter 5 of God beginning afresh on the line of life; that is, those who lived; it is the great line of life, and it culminates in a person walking with God.

**WWM** Would you connect that with John 10, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."

**AJG** Yes, I would. It is very touching, I think, that God has life in mind for us, and sent His Son, His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him.

**PHH** What did you have in mind just now in stressing that it was His *Son*, in verses 9 and 10?

**AJG** Just to stress the love.

**ABP** Does it seem to bring in the truth as typified in Joseph? "He sent a man before them," and then the great result is the Saviour of the world?

**AJG** That is interesting, because we come to that in verse 14, do we not? "We have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world," but He really sent Joseph before them to maintain life, did He not? That is what Joseph says, "God sent me before you to preserve life,"

Genesis 45: 5. But, now, there is the moral answer to these things on our part in verse 11. It is remarkable how constantly the truth in this epistle is applied to us in, you might say, a challenging way. "If God has so loved us, we also *ought* to love one another." It is the moral sequence of learning divine love to us.

**PL** And it makes the brethren the true test of love with us, do you think?

**AJG** It does, and it makes too, in the circle of the brethren, a place where God can abide. That is a most encouraging thing, do you not think, that "if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us." You cannot contemplate God finding congenial dwelling conditions apart from love, love among the brethren.

**WSS** Does it not raise an exercise with us as to how far we are really occupied with the love of God made known in such a marvellous way?

**AJG** It does, but then that raises the question as to how much we are really living, living in relation to God.

**Ques** Is the objective presentation of things in this epistle, the first one in verse 16 of chapter 3, and where we are reading now, a great help in matters of adjustment? There may be perhaps things in terms referred to as corrective, but should they not always be accompanied by a living presentation of Christ?

**AJG** Hence the importance of our cultivating links of brotherly love with one another, with our local brethren, with all of them, without partiality, and doing it before the troubles arise. I expect many will remember the reading we had in Park Street years ago with Mr. Taylor, in which he referred to Paul going up to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of Peter. That was his object in going.

He wanted to establish brotherly links with Peter, and that stood him in good stead later on when he had to withstand Peter to the face; he had already got brotherly links. So that although, for the truth's sake, he had to withstand him to the face, the links of brotherly love were not broken.

**JMcK** Does this give us a scope for love? The brethren are a scope for love?

**AJG** They are the circle in which love is expressed and developed. You do not exactly love men in the world, you show grace to them.

**APT** Peter says, "our beloved brother Paul."

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**EJH** Where would you put the thought of love, in regard to our brethren with whom we cannot walk on account of the truth?

**AJG** Well, love, of course, has to maintain a certain reserve. You cannot go with them in opposition to the truth, but then there is the divine nature in them and in us, and there may be something perhaps that you can link on with in view of helping them.

**AWGT** They belong to the family, do they not?

**AJG** They belong to the family, and they have got Christ in their hearts.

**EJH** I think Mr. Darby said that we should keep our feet in the narrow path, and our heart as large as we can.

**AJG** Quite so.

**APT** Was Paul speaking to Peter, when he came down to Antioch, righteousness or love, or both?

**AJG** Both, surely. It was love of the truth and love of his brother that marked Paul in withstanding Peter to the face.

**GRC** Does the presentation of the Lord in Revelation 2 and 3 help, in that He was girt about the breasts with a golden girdle? He was reviewing the church in responsibility, and His affections could not flow out so freely as He would have desired. I was thinking of those we cannot walk with.

**AJG** Quite so. But then in regard of Laodicea, we find that He is prepared to stand at the door and knock, because there is *someone* that is true there.

**ABP** Does the reference to the breasts, however, show that love was there?

**AJG** It does, indeed.

**HDT** Indeed it is mentioned in the word to Laodicea, "*I rebuke and discipline as many as I love.*"

**AJG** Yes.

**CJHD** Would you say that Acts 15 shows how helpful love is in getting the brethren into line with the truth, for having arrived at a common judgment it is said that they sent "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Do you think that would help forward the matter of the present truth among us, if those who present it are of that character?

**AJG** It certainly would, because it would commend the truth, undoubtedly. Then they took pains to send Judas and Silas as well, two whom I suppose the brethren at Antioch had probably never met before, who should tell them the same things. So that they were careful that they should be fully assured as to what had been arrived at.

**APT** The word 'grace' apparently does not appear in this epistle.

**AJG** Well, what is your thought in that?

**APT** I wondered if it is the same word as 'love,' or at least if it is not on that line. It answers to it - grace and truth. How can we help the brethren apart from grace, which is really loving them?

**AJG** It is quite true that you cannot help them apart from grace, but love is a deeper thing than grace. Love is the root of grace. Grace is love in activity, adapting itself to the needs of those whom you are moving towards.

**WD** Mr. Stoney said he would never love his brother beyond the standard of the truth. If there was a reserve as to the truth he should show a reserve in his love.

**AJG** That is true. We have it in chapter 2, "He that loves his brother abides in light." If I compromise the truth out of affection for my brother I am not abiding in light. "He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him."

**AHG** Would you say a little as to the bearing of verse 12, "No one has seen God at any time"; and then, "if we love one another, God abides in us."

**AJG** God dwells in those conditions, I think. "God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us" and there you see the nature of God. No one has seen God at any time, He has been declared in the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, but now you can see the nature of God in expression in the circle of the saints; His love prevails there.

**AHG** Is that the continuation of your thought that this is a circle in which what is of God is seen?

**AJG** Quite so, and seen in an abiding way. "God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us."

**HW** Would you connect that with the expression "which thing is true in him and in you"? In the first chapter of John's gospel it is the only-begotten Son who has declared Him, now God is known through His people here, according to this epistle.

**AJG** Yes, there seems to be the same thought, "which thing is true in him and in you."

**WSS** God abiding in the saints and giving us of His Spirit - is that the basis of the testimony? "We have seen, and testify."

**AJG** Quite so. It is the basis of our knowledge. "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit," and then the testimony flows out from that, "we have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world."

**GCS** This is not limited to our localities, is it? Would it not go out universally?

**AJG** Oh! that is quite true, but it is in our localities that the reality of these things is tested. It is there that love really expresses itself, in the circle in which we have to move continually.

**WF** Do you connect this with John 13 and 14, the Lord's service in feet-washing and then His references to "love among yourselves" and love to one another, and then in chapter 14 the abiding conditions?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right.

**APCL** Could you tell us what you see to be the difference between verse 13, "he has given to us *of* his Spirit," and the last clause of the previous chapter, "hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given to us." Is there some distinction?

**AJG** Well, "given to us *of* his Spirit" seems to me to point somewhat to the feelings and affections of God, do you not think?

**APCL** I do. So therefore it is not just a matter of the indwelling Spirit but that He has given us "*of* his Spirit."

**AJG** Quite so, so that the same Spirit marks us.

**ABP** I should like to ask for help as to what is spoken of, I think, four times in this section, namely, the thought of love being perfected. I wondered whether this was what the apostle was working up to.

**AJG** I think so, so that we are immovable, love is perfected. Whatever happens in your individual circumstances or in the testings that arise in the testimony or conditions among the saints, whatever arises that may distress the mind and spirit, you are not shaken in your enjoyment of divine love, you have arrived at fixedness.

**ABP** Would it be right to say that not only have you appreciated love in revelation, but you have put it into circulation, and experienced it coming back?

**AJG** I think that is so. The more we learn to love one another, the more we find that love is circulating among the saints, and, in fact, we receive a great deal more love than we show, as a rule.

**JM** Would you open up a little the thought of abiding in God?

**AJG** It is the result of the knowledge of God, that we have got a fixed position. One has referred already in these readings to what Mr. Taylor said years ago, in connection with this verse; he linked it with Psalm 90, how Moses said, "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." What a thing for a man to say! In all the vicissitudes that Moses experienced with the people he found his rest and his home in God, the knowledge of God. And so that is what we are being brought to here, "God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him." The love that is enjoyed is traced to its source.

**JAP** Is verse 15 an encouragement to the feeblest?

**AJG** "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God. God abides in him, and he in God." I think so, because the confession involves that we are in the light of the revelation of God, the way that God has come out to us in love.

**PHH** Do you think the tender way in which the Lord dealt with the man in John 9, and His question in the end, would show that there is a certain desire of love with the Lord, that we should arrive at this point? Is it something like love's perfecting?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. You mean that the Lord was really leading the man on, in order that he might arrive at this, that he really had got the Son of God before his soul.

**PHH** Yes. He says, "dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

**AJG** Yes.

**ABP** And would you say Martha also, how settled she seems to be in John 12, after having confessed Jesus as Son of God, according to chapter 11.

**AJG** Quite so. She needed a little adjustment after that still, in the latter part of John 11, but, as you say, she really came to settled conditions in John 12. She says, "I believe that *thou* art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world," John 11: 27.

**MPS** What is the importance of the word 'seen' in verse 14, in connection with what has just been said?

**AJG** I suppose it gives power to the testimony, "We speak that which we know" is somewhat of that character. "We have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world." What do you think yourself?

**MPS** I was connecting it in my mind with the Lord's words, "This is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son, and believes on him, should have life eternal," and then the passage referred to in John 9, "thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he."

**GCS** Is it seen in John 4, the woman having to do with the Lord, and then those to whom she went speaking of Him as the Saviour of the world?

**AJG** Quite so. That is a good example.

**APCL** As to love being perfected, verse 17 seems to give an extension of that in regard of "boldness in the day of judgment."

**AJG** I think that is encouraging, because every one of us has, in principle, to face the day of judgment, not condemnation, but God will bring every work into judgment and we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. But then love is perfected with us, "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment," that is, when things are tested, so to speak, and what gives us boldness is that "as *he* is, *we* also are in this world." I think that expression "as he is" is most encouraging; it directs our hearts to Jesus as He is, and where He is. He is in the Father's love; He is the centre of the love of God, you might say. In God's presence, it says, there is fulness of joy, and Jesus is there. He is there in complete acceptance, as the Object of love, the love that abides upon Him. Well now, "as he is, *we* also are in this world." That would give the greatest boldness to us.

**APCL** So that it does not say that love *will* be perfected in view of that, but it *has been*. Are we to have the consciousness of that now, so that something of what He is should mark us in this world?

**AJG** Quite so, and that we become fixed and immovable, I think, so that we can always draw near to God without any fear or distance. Even if things come in that have to be confessed, well, they can be confessed.

**JSE** Are these assuring statements for our encouragement to move on this substantial highway?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**AHG** Is this elimination of fear a very necessary matter for us?

**AJG** It is, because it is natural to us, when we do not know God, of course, to fear. Many Christians are not made perfect in love, but this epistle has in view that we should be perfected in love.

**APT** "In this world." What does that actually mean?

**AJG** Just where we are.

A.P.T. Is it physical?

**AJG** You mean it is not the world in a moral sense?

**APT** Yes; I was asking for help.

**AJG** Well, quite so. We do not belong to the world in a moral sense. We are not of the world, even as He is not of the world, but then we are in it in actual fact, and there is a great deal that is distressing going on around us all the time, but then "as he is, we also are in this world."

**LF** These verses 15 to 19, in that way, really bring to light the reality which you have mentioned several times in these meetings.

**AJG** Yes. It is a question of giving us substance in our souls, so that we are fixed in the knowledge of God and that it develops as we come out in the features that are proper to those who know God.

**GRC** Do you link the thought of "as he is" with being as He is in righteousness and love - the two lines you have had before you?

**AJG** We had earlier that He is the propitiation for our sins, so that every question of righteousness is settled from that point of view, and He is the Object of unchanging love. That is how it strikes me. I do not know what you think about it. It is "as he is"; He Himself marks out the position that God has placed us in.

**GRC** And if we answer to what is put out here, are we really in the joy of that position? Is that how love becomes perfected?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**PHH** Does it link on at all with 2 Corinthians 5, which I think you had in mind earlier, where the judgment-seat is spoken about? "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the

things done in the body," and so on. But does it mean that as formed in love, perfected, that that state of things and that time is anticipated without any fear, and indeed the manifestation becomes a reality now?

**AJG** Yes, I think so, and I think we can see that while it is a sobering consideration, that we must be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, to receive the things done in the body, yet the more we know God and know Christ the more we will welcome the idea, because it means that we will receive everything that has been done in the body with His own judgment upon it; and it means that we will come into complete accord with His own mind and judgment in regard of everything.

**PHH** And is John's thought here that that should come about now?

**AJG** That we should have boldness in view of it. Quite so.

**PL** "We" involving our relations with one another, do you not think, among other thoughts? All our relations are clarified in the light of the scrutiny and presence of God in light.

**AJG** I think that is so. That is involved in what we have had in the first chapter, that we walk in the light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," and now He has come out into the light and we walk in the light.

**PL** Do you not think the former is general, and this is specific in matters that will arise, because the judgment-seat involves detail, does it not?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**ABP** And does our boldness relate to sincerity now in the anticipation that the judgment-seat of Christ will, in the main, at least, be a confirmation of right judgment arrived at here?

**AJG** Exactly. There is thus no reason why we should not very largely, at any rate, anticipate the judgment-seat of Christ by getting the Lord's judgment upon detail now, day by day.

**HDT** It is a positive statement, is it not? It is not 'as He was so ought we to be' but "as he is, we also are."

**AJG** Quite so.

**HDT** Any real believer can take great comfort from that, because that is the divine point of view, is it not?

**AJG** Exactly.

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (5)

### 1 John 5

**AJG** This chapter seems to emphasise the victory, or supremacy, that attaches to those who are begotten of God, the very existence of the world, which lies in the wicked one, only giving occasion for the superiority and ultimate supremacy of God, showing itself in those begotten of Him, to come into evidence. It is a great triumph for God, that He should be established thus in supremacy in the hearts of His own. We get the statement to begin with, that "Every one that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God," and then the love amongst ourselves that embraces those who are thus begotten of Him. We can see, I think, that no one but one who is begotten of God would believe that Jesus is the Christ. He is the kind of Man, according to Isaiah 53, who is despised and rejected of men, one from whom men turn away; so that no one but one in whom God has wrought would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the chosen One of God, to the exclusion of every other. So that Christ, in that way, becomes the test and the evidence of the work of God, or of the generation of God. As soon as the matter of loving the children of God comes in, the Spirit of God (through the writer of the epistle) brings in, as He often does, an immediate test, a test as to the genuineness of our love, whether it really is love that is of God or not. "Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God *and keep his commandments*. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

**EJH** Would those commandments embody the whole truth as given to us in the Scriptures?

**AJG** I suppose everything that is the expression of the will of God would have the character of commandment, because God is God; but it turns our thoughts, it seems to me, to Christ, the Ark of the testimony. God introduced a Man who loved God's will and had it in His heart, and in doing so gave testimony to the fact that He would secure a whole system taking character from Him.

**JSE** Is there any thought in this first verse that we endorse, as begotten of God, God's full committal to Jesus as the anointed Man?

**AJG** Yes, I think there is. That is how it appeals to me. We can easily read it, "Every one that believes that Jesus is the Christ," and perhaps not see the import of it. But if we think of what kind of Man Jesus is, and what is involved in His being *the Christ*, the One to whom God has committed Himself to the

exclusion of every other, I think we can see that no one, save one who is begotten of God, will really take that up, that He is the Christ.

**ECM** Does that come in in John 4? The woman said, "is not *he* the Christ?" following on the thought of new birth.

**AJG** Yes, that is so. The gospel is written, as we know, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. The woman in chapter 4 comes to it that He is the Christ, and the man in chapter 9 comes to it that He is the Son of God, and Martha in her confession embraces both.

**WSS** Because John has the full scope of the truth in mind, would you think it would link up with Ephesians 3, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith in your hearts," the whole system of glory of which He is Head?

**AJG** It would go on to that, I have no doubt. That is the full working out of it.

**PL** The terminus in John's epistle is eternal life, is it not, not further than that.

**AJG** It is. What have you in mind?

**PL** Well, in John's writings sonship is presented in Christ, but not in the saints save just at the end.

**AJG** Just so.

**WHK** John uses both words "born of God" and "begotten of God." Would you kindly say if you see any distinction or difference in the terms?

**AJG** I suppose the two terms together embrace the whole thought of what God effects in those who receive His testimony. The "begetting" is by means of what is presented in testimony, and the thought of "born," I suppose, involves the subjective work of the Spirit of God.

**PL** Does it mean that we are God's offspring morally?

**AJG** Quite so.

**JH** The expression is used "of God." The apostle in the previous chapter says, "Ye are *of* God, children," and then later in the chapter "We are *of* God." How would that link up with the verse in John 6 where the Lord is speaking and He says, "not that any one has seen the Father, except he who is of God, *he* has seen the Father," verse 46. Is being *of* God a different thought, from being born or begotten of God?

**AJG** I am inclined to think that the verse you refer to in John 6 refers to the Lord personally; it says "except he who is of God, *he*" (emphatic) "has seen the Father." But when we come to this epistle we are dealing with what is

either begotten or born of God and that can be spoken of as "of God" characteristically. So that, as you say, in verse 4 of chapter 4 we have "Ye are of God, children," then in verse 6, "*We*" - apostolic "we" - "are of God; he that knows God hears us" and so on. Then again in verse 19 of this chapter we have, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." I think where we get "of God" as attached to the saints, it is just that that is characteristic of us as born of Him.

**GAL** And in view of redemption accomplished and the Holy Spirit received?

**AJG** Oh! well, quite so. It is only as receiving the Spirit that we are born of God.

**JSE** In perusing what Jesus says *Himself* and what others say of Him, is there need to keep the line of truth clear in our minds, and worshipfully range ourselves in the presence of Christ in what He says of Himself, and thankfully range ourselves in the presence of the family and what is said of us?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is good.

**JSE** So that when the Lord speaks to the Father in John 17, He actually says "that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Is He not there specifically alluding to Himself in His place as Man, whereas when the writer of this epistle says "He is the true God and eternal life" he is alluding to Christ in the glory and greatness of His Person?

**AJG** Yes, exactly. Hence that shows that we have to be constantly fluid in our thoughts, and dependent too, because the truth as to the Godhead especially cannot be compassed by the natural mind; it has to be received and held in the Spirit.

**GRC** You said just now that we are born of God as having received the Spirit. Would you enlarge on that a bit?

**AJG** I was only thinking that in the 3rd chapter of John's gospel we have the initial work of God referred to in one being born anew, without which no one can see the kingdom of God. Then it refers to one that is born of water and of Spirit, but I think when you get "born of God" that is the complete thought, as far as I understand it, and is only true of one who has received the Spirit. Is that right?

**GRC** Does that help as to our own place and those of other families, because every family will be born anew, will they not?

**AJG** Yes.

**GRC** But in this dispensation it can be said that we are "born of God" involving what you say, the gift of the Spirit.

**AJG** Yes, quite so, and begotten by the full revelation of God that is characteristic of Christianity.

**GRC** Only through the gift of the Spirit can that full revelation really form us.

**AJG** Quite so.

**JMcD** Would it be right to say that new birth in John 3 is connected with the kingdom of God, and being born of God is connected with the family of God?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right, only it is just that we want to be clear as to what "born of God" involves, because it seems to be a full thought, and I think it is right to say that it connects with those that are the product of the full revelation of God in Christ, characteristic of this dispensation.

**EJH** Would that be in any way connected with the word "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God." I am thinking of the word of God in the revelation that you have spoken of?

**AJG** Yes, I suppose so.

**WC** Is not the full thought in the 1st chapter of John's gospel, verses 12 and 13, where it says, "who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God." That is predicated of those who have received Christ.

**AJG** Quite so.

**WC** So it would not be quite the initial thought, would it? It would be beyond the initial thought of being born of the Spirit?

**AJG** Quite so. Is not the thought of being born of water and of the Spirit to stress that what is the result is spirit?

**WC** Quite so.

**PHH** It says in James 1: 18 that by His word He begat us, "According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth." Were you thinking of that as being more an initial, preliminary thing, "born of God" being the full thought?

**AJG** I do not know that I would limit that, "According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a certain first-fruits of *his* creatures." I do not know that I would make that anything less than being born of God; it seems to me it is just presenting the truth from a different aspect.

**PHH** Does it bring before us in any sense the process (for want of a better word)? I am trying to get a little more at the thought of the "born of God" suggestion being the full thought.

**AJG** Well, there is "begat he us," it says, "by the word of truth." It is His own operation; "begat he us by the word of truth." There is the positive presentation of the truth as to God in testimony in Christ, and that has a result in those who receive it, and then there is the formative work of the Spirit which, I suppose, corresponds in a sense with the thought of "born of God." So that the complete thought is there.

**PHH** Would "According to his own will" bring in the full purpose of God?

**AJG** Yes, "according to his own will."

**AHG** Would the believer be in danger from the world until this is reached, born of God? I was thinking of the verse, "For all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world."

**AJG** Yes, and then it says that what gets the victory over the world is our faith; that is, the Christian faith. But here again, do you not think, the apostle is presenting the truth absolutely and abstractly, because alas! there are many as to whose genuineness as believers we have no doubt but who are not victorious over the world, and that is the unfortunate truth that we have to face at the moment. No doubt they will eventually repudiate it in their souls, but the truth is being presented absolutely and abstractly here, that what gains the victory over the world is our faith, the true Christian faith.

**HDT** Would this scripture help our hearts to be habituated to the inclusive character of the love that is proper to us, because there are no sections in the family, are there?

**AJG** No.

**HDT** And while "born of God" we may see, involves what is substantial in the full thought, any one in whom God has operated is in the family. It is not dependent upon their growth, is it?

**AJG** No, it is not. Do you think that these are the characteristics, you might say, of the family, and they are brought before us in order that we should be increasingly exercised to range ourselves in our thoughts with what is of God, in ourselves and in one another, and in that way make more room for the Spirit to develop what is in keeping with it?

**HDT** I believe that is a most important thing, and the more we gave ourselves to it the more we should have in our affections all those in whom God has

operated.

**AJG** Quite so.

**WHK** The term "only-begotten," is referred to Christ in manhood here and in testimony. Would you say a word as to that, please?

**AJG** Well, I suppose "only-begotten" is a term of peculiar endearment, is it not?

**JAP** Does this belong to the heavenly things? The Lord speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit as to earthly things, does He not?

**AJG** The Lord speaks first of all of being born anew, and then of being born of water and of Spirit, "Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Then He says, "If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?" I do not know that one can say too much about that. It has been rightly said that every family that God brings into being, including earthly families, will be born anew, and no doubt the Lord was alluding to Ezekiel, but the great point is that the present time is the time for heavenly things.

**BW** What would the word in Peter's epistle be, "born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God."

**AJG** That is to stress the abidingness and incorruptibility of the result. I think I remember Mr. Taylor saying that it seems to connect up especially with the spiritual intelligence of the saints.

**HDT** And it would be in contrast to the passing character of man, as it says there "all flesh is as grass," and so on.

**AJG** Yes. Quite so.

**HCS** Does the expression "born of God" bring persons more before us, whereas the thought of new birth stresses the work of God?

**AJG** I think there is something in that. Would you say a little more?

**HCS** I was thinking of what you were speaking of, the complete thing, and how the completeness is seen in persons who are morally of God, and are not the characteristics you spoke of - righteousness and love - an exhibition of that? But is not the new birth in John 3 connected with "*that*" - "that which is born"?

**AJG** Well, yes. So that we get in the beginning of this chapter, "Every one that believes that Jesus is Christ is begotten of God"; but then in verse 4 you get

"all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world"; regarding the result in the saints in its totality.

**GRC** Would this thought of being born of God be the basis of what you referred to at the beginning of these meetings, the idea of substantiality, that God has here what really is a continuation of Christ?

**AJG** Yes, and the expression of Himself morally.

I believe it is important to keep that in mind. It is, of course, the continuation of Christ, but the great point is that *God* is brought in in testimony and this is maintained here in His children, and in final result God Himself gains the victory. He enters Himself into the situation created by the incoming of sin, and demonstrates His supremacy over it all, and in result acquires the supreme place, indeed, in the universe.

**PL** So that God having become His own testimony, only what is His offspring can continue it here?

**AJG** Quite so.

**APCL** In verse 5 do you get the application, somewhat personally to us, "Who is he ...?"

**AJG** Quite so. That is perhaps raising a challenge. What do you think about that?

**APCL** Yes, I was thinking that, and it is not a question there of being begotten or born, but believing that Jesus is the Son of God. I was thinking of what you were saying, it is God coming into evidence.

**AJG** I think that is important, and while, on the one hand, it is a question of what is begotten of God, or born of God, on the other hand it does raise the question with us of our responsibility to take up and hold livingly the testimony presented to us. It is only as that is done that real victory over the world is realised.

**JW** Does the position in Joshua correspond?

I am impressed with your remark as to the testimony of God, the expression of the moral nature of God as seen in His people. I wondered whether Jericho would indicate to us the world system, and the people following the ark, under Joshua's word, would indicate the principle on which this is done, and whether our faith would link with that point in the testimony, would you say?

**AJG** I think so. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He is the One who has overthrown the power of death. He is the antitype of the ark, in its power over Jordan, so as to introduce a new world that is entirely of God. But then

the enemy seeks to meet that by the opposition of the world in its moral features; Jericho is not exactly the world as a system, it seems to me, but rather the characteristics and features of the world, which have to be completely overthrown if God is to secure His pleasure in His saints.

**GCS** Would it be more the religious world?

**AJG** Not only the religious world, I think. I think it is *all* that is in the world. It is the *things* that are in the world, not so much the world itself, which is Egypt, but the *things* that are in the world, gaining a place in the circle of the saints where they ought to have no place.

**JMcK** Does it involve constitution, that whilst the believer never loses this characteristic, the thought of being born of God is carried all the way through, yet there is the development of the constitution by faith?

**AJG** I am sure that is important; so that we are to be characteristic believers that Jesus is the Son of God, and that means that He has opened up another world beyond death, of which He Himself is the centre. If that is really held in the soul we shall gain the victory over this world.

**JMcK** So that the feature of being born of God comes very largely into what is testimonial in this setting?

**AJG** It does.

**JMcK** We owe everything to that, and nothing else will stand, but we need development in faith.

**AJG** We do.

**WS** Earlier you remarked that believing that Jesus is the Christ involves the exclusion of every other man, and the bringing in of the Man that is chosen and anointed of God, but does believing that Jesus is the Son of God mean that the world and all that is in it is overthrown in our souls and we are brought into the recognition of a world for God's pleasure?

**AJG** That is how I understand it.

**ASM** Is Saul of Tarsus, preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, an illustration of one who has overcome?

**AJG** Yes, he had seen a light above the brightness of the sun, so that all that was beneath the sun, you might say, was eclipsed to him.

**AH** In John 16 the Lord challenges the disciples' belief, but He goes on in the end to bring Himself before them as the great overcomer. Is that to encourage us in this matter?

**AJG** Yes, it is. Overcoming is a prominent thought all through John's writings. It is very encouraging that the Lord presents Himself as *the* great Overcomer.

**WS** You have spoken of the full testimony of God, and what it produces. Would you say that the faith is important? It speaks distinctively of the faith of God's elect. Would that be particular to this dispensation?

**AJG** The faith that is referred to here certainly is. Of course, all those in whom God has wrought from the beginning are characterised by faith, but it says here that what gets the victory over the world is *our* faith, that is, the Christian faith. It is what is distinctive of this dispensation, as you say.

**ECM** Would it show that Christianity can never be overthrown, it has always been victorious, and the more we go in for it the more victorious it will be?

**AJG** Yes, "all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world; and this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith."

**TJG** When you say "our faith," do you mean the body of Christian doctrine or the personal faith in that?

**AJG** No, the body of Christian doctrine. I understand that is what is in mind here, that the Christian faith, as held livingly in the souls of His people, overcomes the world.

**JMcD** Are the two things seen in these two verses put together in Ephesians 4, the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God?

**AJG** Yes, quite so. "The unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."

**Ques** Is the man in John 9 an example of one who has got the victory over the world?

**AJG** Yes, he is - a very outstanding example. He finds his place, as is often said, in the flock in the next chapter, and what the Lord has for the flock is eternal life.

**EJH** And could we say that he had substantially in his soul what corresponded with what the Lord communicated to him in the title "the Son of God"?

**AJG** I would think so, because he says, "I believe, Lord - and he did him homage."

**GRC** Might we refer back to verse 4 of chapter 4, as to how that may compare with what we are on. It speaks there of overcoming the false prophets, "because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

**AJG** Well, I think it is all of a piece, because although that is referring to religious teachings, yet the essence of false religious teaching is to make something of the first man. You will always find that; whereas this chapter begins with the statement that the evidence that one is begotten of God is that he believes that *Jesus* is the Christ, which excludes every other man. Then you go on, in your faith, to apprehend that He is the Son of God, which means that He has opened up another world the other side of death, to which He Himself is giving character.

**GRC** So that would chapter 4 pave the way for what we have got here? There it is "*he* that is in the world," and the way he would hinder saints arriving at the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

**AJG** Yes, but then the Spirit is greater, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

**HDT** Is it noticeable that verse 1 of chapter 5, and verse 5, is "Every one" and "Who is he," but subsequently you get the plural thought, "we" and "us"? Does that link with what you have just said about the man in John 9, that he is to find his place in the flock?

**AJG** Well, it does, but the first verse, I suppose, is abstract and characteristic, and the fifth verse raises a challenge, I think, as to whether we are, in fact, victorious over the world, and if we are not in fact victorious over the world it raises the question as to whether faith is active with us.

**EJB** Does getting the victory over the world involve at all the matter of associations?

**AJG** It certainly does, because it is by means of unholy associations that Satan would try and keep the saints in the world, that is one of the means he uses.

**GAL** Would you think that the world here is presented, as you were saying yesterday, as having had its origin in Cain and all that Cain stands for?

**AJG** It has its origin in the wicked one. You have to go back further than Cain.

**GAL** Yes, quite so.

**AJG** And, in fact, it lies in the wicked one, which is a most solemn indictment of the world.

**GAL** Yes. I ought to have said it found its expression in Cain.

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**RJW** Would keeping his commandments help us to overcome the world?

**AJG** It certainly would. I think we would get help in considering the ark of the testimony, and the language of Christ, "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart." Now that is the Man God has introduced in testimony, and we are all to take character from Him, and in measure as we do we shall overcome the world.

**EJB** Would you be free to say a word as to associations in detail? I was thinking that we are all clear as to the trade union question, but I was wondering about certain other associations.

**AJG** I think the scripture is so clear that it ought not to be necessary to say anything much about it. The scripture does not say, Do not belong to trade unions; the scripture says, "Be not diversely yoked with unbelievers; for what participation is there between righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship of light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar, or what part for a believer along with an unbeliever?" Then it says, "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and *touch not* what is unclean." "Touch not" - that is uncompromising. Well now, it should be very simple to apply those principles to actual conditions that exist, and things by which we are tested.

**TJG** There is a good deal of confusion, nevertheless, in the minds of some, as to what is meant. Would I be permitted to name some of the associations that are exercising some brethren?

**AJG** I think it is a good thing in a meeting like this to keep to the principles and the truth, and it is in the application of the principles to actual things that we are tested as to our faithfulness.

**PHH** Do you think the word in 2 Corinthians 7, that we had last night, about cleansing ourselves "from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear," would help us as to any distinctions which we might not be quite clear about?

**AJG** I think it would.

**PHH** It has been said, has it not, that to refuse membership of trade unions is a matter of basic righteousness, but some of these other things may require the exercise of practical holiness, and that I suppose is a more sensitive kind of standard.

**AJG** Quite so. It is significant to me that in Leviticus we are told that "every offering of thine oblation shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thine oblation - with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," Leviticus 2: 13. Well now, we constantly

draw near to God; we draw near to Him not only with burnt-offerings, but with the oblation, which involves a certain exercise as to subjective correspondence in us with what we profess to appreciate in the burnt-offering; but all these oblations must have salt, and I believe salt may be regarded as the fear of God. The fear of God is to enter into every matter. If we draw near to God we are to be characteristically marked by the fear of God.

**JMcK** So that the glory of the matter is that it is our faith that overcomes the world. You were speaking yesterday of a certain climax in Enoch, walking with God. By faith he would arrive at the mind of God, would he not, and be strengthened in his path; so that there is a glory in faith doing these things, overcoming the world.

**AJG** I am sure of that, and every day that Enoch walked with God he would become more sensitive and more separate.

**ABP** Is it worthy of note that the man who said he had bought five yoke of oxen said, Please have me for excused?

**AJG** Yes, excused. That is, it was a compromise.

**MLJM** Would the Lord's own words in His prayer in John 17 help, when He says, "I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil."

**AJG** It would indeed, and then He goes further and says, "and *I* sanctify myself for them, that *they* also may be sanctified by truth." So that we are to keep our eye upon Christ, and the place where He is, in order to learn what the true measure of sanctification for us in God's mind is.

**GRC** In Hebrews 12 it says, "Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace, by which let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear." The word 'serve' is priestly service. Would you regard then the "reverence and fear" there as the salt, that you were referring to?

**AJG** Yes, I would.

**EuR** The scripture referred to in 2 Corinthians 6 is very uncompromising, is it not?

**AJG** That is the whole point, and therefore the fear of God operating in us would take it up in its uncompromisingness. I suppose most of us - or all of us, I hope - draw near to God, you might say, with a burnt-offering every day; we draw near to God and make mention of the name of the Lord Jesus. But then with our daily burnt-offering there must be an oblation and a drink

offering, which involves a certain subjective correspondence in us to that which we profess to appreciate in the burnt-offering, and with all our oblations we must see that there is salt.

**GRC** Would having "a kingdom not to be shaken" encourage us? God can see us through, would you say?

**AJG** Yes, exactly.

**APCL** Do you think the way in which John speaks here of "our faith" would preserve us from independent thinking and independent action? It is not *the* faith exactly, it is the same meaning, but it is "*our* faith." Should unity mark us in what we are doing in these matters?

**AJG** It certainly should. That is an important matter. So that the ministry has in view our arriving at the *unity* of the faith.

**APCL** Just so. So that it is not a question exactly of what *I* may think, or my estimate; it is to be governed by *our* faith that is being taken on, corresponding with *the* faith?

**AJG** Quite so.

**SH** The difficulty with many of us - if I might be allowed to say it - is that the trade union is a test of fellowship, but there seems to be other associations that are very serious and we do not seem able to help our brethren locally as to these matters.

**AJG** I think there is a good deal of exercise over other matters besides trade unions. The trade unions were perhaps the most flagrant because of their obviously evil and murderous character, but there are other associations that are certainly causing much concern among the brethren, and many brethren have repudiated them. I have no doubt we shall find that the requirements of the fellowship, the holiness that it involves, will necessitate our being much stricter.

**GAL** I was wondering whether it helps a little to see what God says to Satan in the 3rd of Genesis, right at the beginning of this matter, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed," and the victory and the final crushing of Satan seems to be through the conflict as thus carried on.

**AJG** Yes, exactly.

**AWP** Is there not something very choice in this thought of victory, and the expression "Who is he ...?" It brings it home to each one of us individually to have part in it.

**AJG** Yes. It is a very important matter and an invigorating matter, if we look at it in its right light, that it is given to us in grace to have part personally in this triumph of God over what is of the devil in the world.

**PHH** "Who is he ...?" Would that be Daniel? And then "our faith," the collective thing, would that be the three in the furnace?

**AJG** Well, they would illustrate it.

**PHH** That is what I mean.

**JMcK** Following the great faith chapter in Hebrews, the apostle speaks of us "having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, laying aside every weight." Would not the cloud of witnesses stand for the unity of faith in the testimony? It is one cloud, is it not? All these men of faith were in one great matter, the testimony.

**AJG** They were, and therefore you could rightly call it "the unity of faith." But now we have got "the unity of *the* faith," *the Christian faith*; and the Christian faith, which is governed by the full revelation of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit, is necessarily more sensitive and requires more separation than the faith of Old Testament saints.

**GAL** That is, the nearer we are to God in holy privilege, the more we ought to be holy in ourselves to correspond with that?

**AJG** Exactly.

**CWO'LM** Does not Jude's epistle take up this very matter? It refers to "the faith once delivered to the saints," and to all the unholy associations that surround it?

**AJG** Yes, it does.

**ABP** Would being "born of water and of Spirit" (I have in mind particularly the water now), if it is an experience of soul, help us in relation to these unclean matters we are speaking of? We have been "born anew" and being "born of water and of Spirit." I wondered if there is not an intimate link between that and baptism, and the general principle of the use of the water freely, for cleansing, that we may be free from every pollution.

**AJG** I think that is right. So that being born of water brings in the moral element, does it not?

**WC** Is Naaman an illustration of that? He had to wash seven times in Jordan, not in any other water. I was thinking it would correspond with the various issues in 2 Corinthians 6, and the different things that have to be faced. Did

he not face the whole thing and completely dissociate himself from all that he had once been in?

**AJG** Yes. So that his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child.

**WC** He was an overcomer, was he not? He got the victory over the world.

**AJG** Quite so.

**WC** Would not the world with him be the other waters, but he bowed to the value of the waters of Jordan?

**AJG** Yes, he must accept Jordan, and that is the place where Elijah had gone through before he was taken up into heaven.

**WC** Yes, and would the way the Lord has gone be an appeal to us in relation to these associations? And make a way for us out of the whole thing into what is of God? Would that not help us, in facing these things and taking the plunge?

**AJG** Quite.

**GRC** Does verse 6 help us in that way, "This is he that came by water and blood"?

**AJG** Yes, I was thinking we should pass on to that now. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." And then "it is the Spirit that bears witness."

**CAW** Why is it that in the gospel the blood comes before the water, and here the water before the blood?

**AJG** The blood coming before the water, I suppose, is foundational, as establishing, through the death of Christ, the basis of our blessing, and as bringing out the testimony to divine love, but this is an epistle addressed to those who are already believers and therefore the water is brought first. It is the moral aspect of the death of Christ, as setting us apart from all that is unclean by the unreserved acceptance of death. It is not by water only, it is not reforming the first man, it is by water and blood. It is a cleansing that is made effective through death.

**ECM** Does it involve the complete removal of the first order of man?

**AJG** Exactly.

**ECM** And the blood has met the claims of God, but here the water aspect comes first?

**AJG** Yes, the water aspect coming first shows that it is the cleansing that is in mind. But then it is not by water only, but by water and blood. Blood is the witness that death has come in. As you say, it is the complete ending of the man who was unclean, and that has to be accepted by us unreservedly in the power of the Spirit.

**GRC** Did not Mr. Taylor say many years ago that in the flood God cleansed the earth by water only? It is very affecting that in the death of Christ there is complete cleansing.

**AJG** Quite so.

**GRC** And yet it is by water and blood, which should touch our hearts, because we are preserved, are we not, and carried over?

**AJG** Exactly. The man is removed and yet the persons are retained and set up in life in God's Son.

**GWB** What is the bearing of the way it is put "This is he that came ... ."?

**AJG** That it was deliberately in mind in His coming in. He came on this principle, to set aside one order of manhood and life in that man, and to introduce life in Himself beyond death, and the Spirit is the witness to us that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

**GRC** I wondered if this would help us as to associations, because if God were to deal with them in themselves He would have to sweep the scene right away, and because, on account of the blood, we are retained for His pleasure, why should we go on with those things which morally in the death of Christ were swept away?

**AJG** Exactly. The tares are being gathered in bundles to be burned; that is the end of the bundles, to be burned. It is a good thing to bear that in mind.

**Ques** Is there a responsibility on the local brethren to deal with these matters of associations, in the light of what has been said about "our faith"? Should it be brought home to the individual locally?

**AJG** Yes, it certainly should. It leaves scope for individual pastoral care, to start with, but it must be followed up. If it is not paid heed to, it should be followed up by the local company.

**PHH** The fact that it is in 2 Corinthians, a local epistle, would confirm that, would it not?

**AJG** It would, indeed.

**WJT** Should it be preceded by what we get in verse 16 of our chapter, "If any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for those that do not sin unto death."

**AJG** Quite so. That is one thing that we are to do; we are to use the nearness to God that we have on behalf of those whom we may see sinning, but then there are other things come into it too. If a man be taken in a fault, those who are spiritual are at once called into play; they should exercise their influence in seeking to restore him.

**APT** Does this statement "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ," refer to the incarnation?

**AJG** Yes. What is in your mind?

**APT** It says "He that *came* ... ." I wondered if it not only refers to His death but also to His incarnation?

**AJG** I think the whole thing hangs together; He came on that principle; He comes into testimony. He came to die. That is what the Lord came for. He did not come to improve the world, or to improve man in the flesh; He came to end man in the flesh and open up another world beyond death.

**ABP** And does not this give us an incentive to have an attitude of mind or of purpose of heart?

**AJG** It does, indeed.

**CH** Did not Mr. Darby call attention to the different prepositions used, "he that came *by* water" is the character in which He came, but "not *by* water only, but *by* water and blood" is the power displayed by Him according to that character.

**AJG** I am not sure that I quite follow that. Would you mind enlarging on it?

**CH** Well, I think he makes a point of the fact that the Lord came into that condition. That is what our brother, I think, now refers to. At the incarnation He came into that position and condition, but in that position power and efficacy was in Him, so that He met the situation fully in those He met, and do you think the power and efficacy of that now applies to the saints in the Spirit, but it was in the Lord when He was here.

**AJG** Quite so. So that it is the Spirit that makes these things good to us. While the water and the blood are mentioned first, it says "it is the Spirit that bears witness, for the Spirit is the truth. For they that bear witness are three - the Spirit" - putting the Spirit first - "and the water, and the blood; and the three agree in one."

**CH** Putting the thing simply, is not the water for sanctification and the blood for justification?

**AJG** That is true, but I think there is more in the blood in this passage, because it seems to me where it says "not by water only, but by water and blood," it is emphasizing that the sanctification or cleansing that was in mind is a sanctification or cleansing that is effected by means of death, but love witnessing to that. And that is what we really need to lay hold of, that it is the complete ending of the man, the Spirit being the power for us to take that up.

**GAL** So that while it was a witness to the wonderful love of God, there was what was judicial about it?

**AJG** There was, indeed.

**HDT** Would it be appropriate to ask whether there is any connection with the waters of purification - the red heifer in Numbers 19, and the water here?

**AJG** I think there would be. There is a link morally with that, as far as I understand the truth. That was a permanent provision, that they had to carry with them in the wilderness, was it not?

**HDT** Yes, it was a question not merely of the meeting of guilt, it was the matter of the maintenance of communion.

**AJG** Quite so.

**HDT** And does not the water have that particularly in view?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. So that the Spirit is the prominent matter, "the Spirit *is* the truth."

**PHH** How far does that go? What is your thought about that? "The Spirit is the truth."

**AJG** I think it goes very far indeed; that is my impression. We are well acquainted, of course, with the fact that the Lord says that He Himself is the truth, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." That is, the truth is before us in Christ objectively, but then the answer to that is that the Spirit in the believer is the truth subjectively, and the more we can arrive at the reality of practical subjection to the Spirit the more we shall be practically in the truth. Anything that is really of the Spirit in us will certainly be the truth. I do not know whether that helps?

**PHH** Yes, thank you. Are we to understand that the mention of coming by water and blood, first of all, before the Spirit is mentioned, means that the truth can only be operative with us by the Spirit as we accept death in the practical teaching and value of it?

**AJG** I think so. It is only on the basis of death that the Spirit has come, and that is an important matter, because it is a question of the witness that we have in ourselves. We have the Spirit as witness in ourselves, but then the Spirit has come consequent upon Christ having died and gone to the right hand of God. The Spirit is always faithful in our hearts to Christ as He is and to His death.

**ECM** Would it be right to say that the water and the blood and the Spirit are the means by which we come consciously into the enjoyment of eternal life?

**AJG** Yes, it would, the Spirit itself being the power for the enjoyment of eternal life and the witness that we have it.

**ABP** In connection with the statement "the Spirit is the truth" would it be right to say that the Spirit finds expression through persons, so that this is not entirely an abstract statement, but a matter that is worked out through persons?

**AJG** I think so. So that if a brother stands up and he is speaking in the Spirit, what he says will certainly be the truth.

**CWC** Would that clause show the seriousness of refusing what the Spirit is giving at any particular time in ministry?

**AJG** It certainly would.

**GWB** What is the distinction between the water here and in Ephesians 5, "the washing of water by the word"?

**AJG** I think there is a strong link there, because I understand the word for 'washing' there is not the same word as for feet-washing, but it is the full thought; it is the thought of bathing. It seems to me therefore that that refers to the way that Christ in His love for the assembly would bring home to our hearts the full import of His death, as setting us apart from all that once attached to us, in order that we might take account of ourselves as "of his flesh, and of his bones."

**JSE** So that the Spirit, as being first in the three that bear witness, is enforcing upon the family this great matter as to the necessity of moral suitability in order to enjoy to the full what is connected with the blood, because the blood involves the termination of one condition, does it not, and the opening up of another?

**AJG** Yes, and the Spirit and the water and the blood agree in this witness, "that God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." Hence the whole

point with us now, I think, is how far we are really sowing to the Spirit and reaping life eternal as a practical thing.

**JSE** So that the matter of associations, that has been raised, is determined by us severally as we yield to the Spirit and lay hold of the necessity of moral suitability for entry into what is the other side, which is connected with eternal life, is it not?

**AJG** Quite so.

**RJW** Does James, chapter 4, bear on what we are speaking about? It says in verse 4, "Whoever therefore is minded to be the friend of the world is constituted enemy of God." Then he goes on to speak about the Spirit, "Does the Spirit which has taken his abode in us desire enviously?" And then the last two verses in the epistle show how serious it is to be caught in these things.

**AJG** That is so, and one is touched much of recent years by that verse in James, "the Spirit which has taken his abode in us," as though He would take possession in order that we might be held for God, and it says "He gives more grace." He is prepared to help in all the practical exercises that God dwelling in us entails for us.

**JW** Would the reference to His Son in this section link us with an order of things and affections in life?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. I think it is most stimulating that the world that the Son of God has opened up is a world of love, the Father's love for the Son. The Father has many families, and they are all headed up in One who is the Object of love.

**GAL** In the beginning of the meeting our brother. Mr. L., referred to eternal life here as being viewed in the Son. Obviously something was in mind, and I wondered if we could have the benefit of that?

**PL** Well, the terminal of the epistle is eternal life in this Person, is it not?

**AJG** It is. I think you said that we do not get sonship as applying to the saints in John's writings, except just the allusion in Revelation 21. On the other hand, it is just a question - and I do not think I am saying anything different from what Mr. Taylor once said - whether eternal life may not include sonship, only that the great thought of sonship is what is for the pleasure of God, whereas eternal life is what we enjoy. I think we must come to it, at least that is one's impression, that so far as the inheritance we come into is concerned, what is enjoyed in the way of eternal life includes the present enjoyment of sonship.

**GRC** So that while eternal life is a wide thought, and the saved families will come into it, have we not life of the highest order in that realm?

**AJG** Yes. Life in His Son.

**HDT** Is it remarkable that in the well-known passage in John 17, the Lord says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son." It certainly goes on later to say "that they should know thee, the only true God" - speaking to the Father - "and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," but the prelude is "glorify thy Son." Would you say something about that?

**AJG** It is very remarkable that the Lord speaks in the third person there, but what have you to say?

**HDT** I was only just thinking that whilst eternal life is to be enjoyed now, we cannot entirely exclude the thought of relationship from it.

**AJG** Quite so.

**JMcD** Is there a certain link between eternal life and sonship in verse 20 of this chapter?

**AJG** That is, it is His Son Jesus Christ, who is the eternal life. Is that what is in your mind?

**JMcD** Yes. The whole verse is connected with the Son of God, and being "in his Son Jesus Christ" is linked up with the thought of eternal life.

**AJG** I think we want to keep the truth in its proper setting, as far as possible. One does not want to go too far in it, but I think eternal life, as being the present inheritance that the saints are brought into to enjoy, must include the enjoyment on our part of sonship, but the prime thought of sonship, of course, is that it is for the pleasure of God.

**PHH** Is what is being said to give us an understanding that, according to Scripture, eternal life has a kind of dual aspect. For Israel, for instance, it will have an earthly aspect, then shall the nations go away into life eternal, but in regard of the assembly it has a higher aspect which touches on this great matter of sonship?

**AJG** I think that is right. Eternal life, of course, is, as you say, a very wide thought embracing Israel and the saved nations on the earth in the day to come, but all that the assembly enters into must have a uniquely heavenly character attaching to it.

**WC** Would it be right to say that eternal life primarily is a matter of God and men?

**AJG** Yes, I think so.

**WC** It seems the way that God preserves the race, does it not? He has brought to pass, in His Son, what has met the whole moral question and opened up a sphere of life beyond death.

**AJG** I suppose it really has a certain testimonial bearing; that is to say, it is what is seen to be enjoyed in the presence of death, or in the scene where death has been.

**WC** So that I suppose eternal life especially links with the world to come, and sonship with the eternal scene, but would there not be an overlapping in our case?

**AJG** I think so. I think this epistle rather shows that there is a certain overlapping, because eternal life seems to be put on such a high level here. It is connected with the thought of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

**JTS** Is there any connection with what we have in the 2nd chapter, verse 24, "if what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which *he* has promised us, life eternal."

**AJG** Yes, I think there is. But we ought before we close to touch on verse 20 because it is such an important one. It says "we know," as though the writer of the epistle is summing things up now. "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." It is a remarkable appellation, that we should know "him that is true." It is not here to know "the true God," which would be God in contrast to false gods, but know God in that character, "him that is true." That is, as I understand it, One who has everything in its right moral relation; He has man in his proper relationship with Him as God, in the place of subjection, and secures it eternally, and yet it is morally right, because of what He is in His nature, that man should be in the greatest possible nearness. So "him that is true" really in the working out of it, involves, it seems to me, the light in which we know God, the whole economy. All is the result, it seems to me, of the fact that He is true and loves to have things in their true relation.

**WSS** Does knowing "Him that is true" give us a true standard for every moral matter; it goes on to say, "keep yourselves from idols."

**AJG** Yes. Quite so.

**JH** In John 7 the Lord says, "he that sent me is true." Earlier than that He says, "he that seeks the glory of him that has sent him, *he* is true," emphasising the Father and the Son as being true, as you are saying.

**AJG** Yes, quite so. It seems to me, not that one can say much about it, to be worth pondering that God should be presented to us as the One that is true. He will have everything true in the relations that are morally proper to it - Himself supreme, the creature subject, and yet because He is love and desires to express His love towards His creature, the man must be with Him in conditions suitable to that love.

**ABP** And is the truth the means by which we are brought into that?

**AJG** I think so, so that it all centres in His Son. The Son of God has come, and then it says, "we are in him that is true," that is, in God, "in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." It is as though the whole truth, in both sides of it so to speak, is centred in Christ.

**ANG** Is it not affecting that at the outset of the epistle we have the report as to the eternal life, which was with the Father, and then at the end it is "this life is in his Son"? Is that a suggestion that these things will be secured and enjoyed in family relationships?

**AJG** Yes, quite so, and yet the family relationships really eventuate in this that man is seen in right relations with God.

**GRC** Would you say another word as to your remark that both sides are seen in Christ, "He is the true God and eternal life." Will both sides be seen in Him eternally?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. We shall never see God save in Christ, and manhood according to the heart of God is before Him always in Christ, and the saints in Him.

**GRC** Would the full place Christ has in that way help us in the worship of God?

**AJG** I think it would. We never dispense with the Mediator.

**GRC** So that while in the eternal state it says "the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection," it does not alter this truth, does it, that He is still the true God and will be worshipped as such?

**AJG** Quite so. It does not alter that at all.

**HDT** But it shows that sonship continues, does it not?

**AJG** Oh! it does. "Then shall the Son also himself be placed in subjection," it says. That is eternally.

**SJH** Mr. Darby remarked as to "the true God and eternal life," and used the expression 'identity of extent.' I wondered if that verse would suggest to us that while we distinguish between the Persons in the Deity we should not separate Them in our minds?

**AJG** I believe that is always important in speaking of God, that while we are permitted to distinguish between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, yet we have to remember that God is One, and always carry that in our thoughts, and not be unduly analytical.

**EJH** Does every feature of idolatry hinder our enjoyment of eternal life?

**AJG** It certainly would. This is a very fine climax to arrive at, that "we are in him that is true." We are in God, in His Son Jesus Christ. That does not mean, of course, that we have part in Deity, but it does mean that we are held in the most intimate nearness in the knowledge of the blessed God in His nature of love.

**WC** So that, in result, what we have here shows that God has never deviated from any of His thoughts.

**AJG** No.

**WC** The situation created by sin has brought out the greatness of God in the Three Persons, and all that has been effected and secured in the saints, an eternal scene where God will dwell.

**AJG** It has indeed, and it establishes in that way the supremacy of God. That is to be made good now in the hearts of the saints, as it will be made good throughout the universe.

**LF** Mr. Raven very simply summed it up for us in his saying that eternal life for us is living in the love of God.

**AJG** Quite so.

**GCS** Is it of interest that in the end of Matthew where the lie comes in and is circulated, that the Lord says "make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"? Is the full force of God in the economy to meet and answer and overcome the lie?

**AJG** That is very striking.

**JAP** In this sense is there what is eternal attached to the thought of eternal life?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. Although, of course, the term "eternal life" will cease to have any force in eternity, I think the character of eternal life as known now is

that it is what is eternal.

## THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (6)

*2 John 1 - 13; 3 John 1 - 14*

**AJG** It will be noticed that these two epistles, which are of a personal character, emphasise the truth first of all as that which is a bond between us, so that John says that he loves "the elect lady and her children," and "all who have known the truth" loved them as well, for the truth's sake, and then in the third epistle John's children give him joy by reason of their "walking in the truth." Then further we are to be "fellow-workers with the truth," and finally the truth itself bears witness to those who are formed by it. The truth therefore has a very important place in these two epistles, and also the thought of "in truth," so that we have "loving in truth" and "walking in truth." The epistle, which as one has said is personal in character, contemplates I suppose the working out practically among the saints of the truth of the first epistle and, moreover, it shows (as we might expect, seeing that the truth is involved) that there will be the ceaseless efforts of the enemy against it. The second epistle brings in the enemy seeking to get in from outside, and the necessity for the truth's sake of being uncompromising in relation to it, and then in the third epistle the enemy seeks to operate from the inside and we have the necessity for going on with what is good in the presence of such.

**PL** Is that seen femininely in two sisters unnamed and yet honoured in spiritual distinction, "the elect lady" and "thine elect sister" and then seen working out in two brothers, who are named, Gaius and Demetrius - femininely and masculinely?

**AJG** Very good.

**WD** Would it be in order to refer to the end of John's general writings? At the end of the gospel we have the greatness of Christ, at the end of the Revelation we have the greatness of the saints, as in the assembly, and at the end of the first epistle we have the question of keeping ourselves from *idols*. Does that suggest to us that the position we have arrived at is governed by the greatness of the Person and the greatness of the company and consequently we have to be brought into harmony, and does all that bear on these further two epistles?

**AJG** Well, that is so undoubtedly.

**JAP** Is this covered by the expression "according as the truth is in Jesus," that is, all that has come out in revelation in regard to Him?

**AJG** Certainly the truth is all out in Christ, He is the great Mediator, but "according as the truth is in Jesus" seems to me to link on especially with the

thought of our having put off the old and having put on the new. I should have thought that the expression there "as the truth is in Jesus" in Ephesians 4 is a more limited thought than the great thought of "the truth," which is the bond between us, and for which we are to stand.

**HDT** Does it link with 1 John 5: 20, "we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true"? Is this the working out of that?

**AJG** Yes, especially the references to "in truth," "loving in truth" and "walking in truth." That is not quite the same thought as "in the truth," but rather that our love is rightly regulated, everything being in right balance, so to speak. Our walk is similarly regulated, so that in Ephesians it speaks of our loins being girt about with truth, not exactly "the truth" but "truth," and God requires truth in the inward parts.

**EJH** "Speak truth everyone with his neighbour" too?

**AJG** Yes.

**ABP** Would this be a great support for our service of praise, the worship of God, to worship "in spirit and truth"?

**AJG** I was thinking that it seems to be a requirement of God, "God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."

**PL** Does the bringing in of these two sisters in such honour by John bear relation to the bringing in of our sisters into all matters affecting the truth, they representing, in a feminine way, the assembly; matters not being kept in the hands of brothers alone?

**AJG** That is so. Here the sister addressed in the second epistle has the honoured position of resisting evil doctrine and refusing admission into the house. It is a very striking position that she is entrusted in that way with the defence of the truth in her own sphere, and that, of course, would work out in the assembly being preserved, and I am sure what you say is important, that of recent years it has come to us authoritatively that the sisters are to be brought into all matters regarding the assembly, as being themselves essential component parts of it.

**WC** Is this the answer to the serpent's approach to the woman and the lie that brought in all the trouble, God's triumph at the end in sisters?

**AJG** That is very good.

**JSE** Is that why the word 'woman' is omitted and two other words are employed? We have "elect lady" and "elect sister."

**AJG** They are honoured in that way and not spoken of merely as women.

**PHH** In what sense is the truth to "be with us to eternity"?

**AJG** I think it is with us in virtue of the abiding presence with us of the Spirit, so that the Spirit maintains our souls eternally, and we are dependent on Him for it, in the full light of God as known in Christ. Would you think that?

**PHH** You are referring it back somewhat then to the expression "the Spirit is the truth"?

**AJG** Yes.

**WC** We have the two words in the second verse "*in us*" and "*with us*."

**AJG** The very same words that the Lord uses in John 14.

**WC** Quite so.

**PHH** And while all this will be with us in eternity, does the expression "to eternity" mean that throughout time all the necessities, including all the evil, will be amply and fully met by the truth in the Spirit?

**AJG** I think so. So that what finally remains is just the truth with nothing to contest it.

**AB** Would the reference to the lady's children have bearing on the motherly and sisterly element among the saints in view of the protection and nurture of the coming generation, and would it bear on the protection of the household and the assembly?

**AJG** That is very important. It is striking that in 2 John 4 he says, "I rejoiced greatly that I have found of thy children" - the elect lady's children "walking in truth," which is a tribute to her own influence and moral power, whereas in 3 John 4 he says "I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of *my* children walking in the truth."

**JSE** Is this term, "the elect lady," a kind of verification of the word in 1 Timothy about the women ruling the house?

**AJG** I was thinking that as we were speaking a moment ago. This second epistle seems to contemplate peculiarly the sphere where the sisters have a special place. As you say, there is the thought of their ruling the house and they have to be watchful as to nothing being allowed in it that is contrary to the truth, and the allusion to *her* children walking in truth seems to me to be a very great commendation of this sister as testifying to her moral power.

**EJH** Do you think that might be why they are not named? In the next epistle the brothers are named, and it says "Greet the friends by name" in that

epistle. Do you think this might refer to sisters generally, what they should take up?

**AJG** I think that is so.

**ABP** Is there any link between this and Luke 15? It occurred to me as you were speaking that it is intimately linked with the Spirit's operation and yet in the style of a woman and in the house, which seems to be an appropriate setting. I just wondered if there might be a connection?

**AJG** I think that is very suggestive, so that is it not the Spirit really that preserves the truth against attacks, and yet it is the Spirit here operating in a woman, a sister, in her house?

**TJG** Would verse 9 of the second epistle, having in mind "whosoever goes forward," be a satanic imitation of the Spirit's present voice in the face of the testimony, and in the third epistle, in Diotrephes, have we the debasing of an outstanding lead by dictatorial methods?

**AJG** I think that would be right.

**GRC** Could you help as to the bearing of the two words "the faith" and "the truth"? The elect lady seems to be in the conflict for the faith in resisting false doctrine?

**AJG** The two expressions are very much the same from one point of view, but I think "the faith" is what we embrace, "the truth" is the truth as to God which is entrusted to us to preserve. Would you say that, or have you something further in mind?

**GRC** No, I have not. I think that helps, but I wish you would say a little more.

**AJG** Well, "the faith" is what we embrace. We have to have faith and we embrace what is presented to us in testimony and it becomes "the faith" among the saints and it has to be contended for. But this is "the truth," the truth as to God, you might say; God is in it, although it is worked out among His children.

**ABP** Are the two seen suggestively here in "the paper" and "the pen"? I noticed that in the second epistle it is "paper and ink," in the third it is "ink and pen." I wondered if "the paper" might suggest our receptivity, linking on with what you said as to the faith, "the pen" rather the presentation, linking on with the thought of the truth.

**AJG** That is very helpful.

**APCL** Does verse 3 show that there will be sufficiency supplied to carry this out? It is the only time that the salutation is so positive, is it?

**AJG** It says it "shall be with you," and is it not one of the fullest salutations? "Grace, ... mercy, peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." It is a most striking salutation for an individual, to a single sister.

**APCL** I wondered whether if we were prepared to take up the truth, for the truth's sake, we can be assured that grace *shall* be with us in that setting?

**AJG** I am sure that is so. I believe the more we are committed simply to the truth, as you say, for the truth's sake, the more we shall experience grace and mercy and peace in the detail of our lives and exercises.

**GRC** And why does it say "the Son of the Father, in truth and love"? Why is the term "in truth" introduced?

**AJG** I think it is that grace shall be with you, mercy and peace, in truth and love; that is how I would read it.

**WC** Is that verse like the supplies flowing into the fortress to sustain the position? She is holding the ground, is she not, in her household and amongst her children, and this passage suggests the abundant supplies to hold the position.

**AJG** Yes. It is very remarkable how the writer of the epistle, the apostle, emphasises *truth* always, he says "in truth and love." That is a very important feature, because some who are really opposing the recovery that is characteristic of this last century or more, make much of love and would have the saints surrender the truth for love's sake. But, in contrast to that, the apostle puts truth first, "in truth and love."

**HFR** Does John in speaking of himself as "the elder" indicate the great need of eldership in relation to the truth? While the epistles are written to individuals, the elders would be concerned that the truth might be maintained in our localities?

**AJG** I think that is right. It is striking that John never calls himself an apostle, but he seems to base his authority on what he was, what he was known to be among the saints as having moral power as an elder. There is an affectionate touch therefore about the way he thus addresses the saints.

**JPH** Do you make much of receiving "the love of the truth" as in Thessalonians?

**AJG** That is the ground of condemnation of some, is it not, that they have not received the love of the truth? What is in your mind?

**JPH** I was just wondering about the positive side of it, that the Spirit of God would give us to love the truth and go in for it. We should seek His help and the help of God to arrive at it in our souls and perhaps be able to help each other. Would that command us as loving it?

**AJG** Do you think that might involve that it is not a question simply of receiving or accepting the truth mentally, but that it is really loved? We take it home to ourselves in that way.

**JPH** I thought that.

**HDT** It is never intended to be a system of theology, is it?

**AJG** No, it is not. The truth is centred in the Person of Christ, and if the truth is loved it is because Christ is loved.

**PL** Does this unique expression "the Son of the Father" have peculiar force in relation to what you are saying? I wondered about the Song of Songs presenting the defence of Solomon's couch; he is referred to in relation to love with his father, is he not?

**AJG** Yes.

**PL** Is she one of those "threescore mighty men, ... the mighty of Israel"? Having her sword upon her thigh because of alarm in the nights?

**AJG** I am sure that is right, and this character of sister, and of course brothers with the same character, are needed all through to the end, are they not?

**PL** She is a Deborah, is she not, a militant, a feminine vessel?

**AJG** Quite so, because of alarm in the nights. There may be one alarm and there may be another one very shortly; you never know, and therefore the sword has got to be on the thigh all through the nights.

**PL** Those who stand by night in the house of the Lord.

**AJG** That is the other side to it. They stand by night or in the nights, having part in the service of God, do they not? But that must be preceded by standing through the nights with the sword on the thigh, because of alarm.

**CJHD** Would the exercises of Psalm 119 enter into the household setting? The Psalmist, towards the end of that Psalm, says "The sum of thy word is truth, and every righteous judgment of thine is for ever," Psalm 119: 160. Would that long Psalm result in our appreciating the truth?

**AJG** I think it would. "The sum of thy word is truth" is a striking expression and then "every righteous judgment of thine is forever." In Jeremiah it says

that God is truth, "But Jehovah Elohim is truth; he is the living God, and the king of eternity," Jeremiah 10: 10. God is said to be truth.

**PHH** Would that be for us in the fulness of revelation?

**AJG** Yes, I suppose it would.

**HCS** In Isaiah 65: 16 we have "the God of truth." "He ... shall bless himself by the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the land shall swear by the God of truth."

**AJG** That is very interesting. I think it bears on what we were saying this morning as to "him that is true," not simply the true God, but that is His character. He is true and it is a most encouraging and comforting thing that God is truth and is spoken of as "Him that is true." Everything therefore will be established in right moral relations to God and to one another.

**APCL** But He is not said to be "the truth"?

A.J.G. No. "He is true."

**APCL** Yes. Is "the truth," therefore, the setting out of the matter?

**AJG** I would think so, first as set out in Christ, then as maintained among the saints by the Spirit.

**APCL** Answering to what God is as "truth" and "true"?

**AJG** Quite so.

**Ques** Are you going to distinguish for us between "walking in truth" and "walking in the truth"?

**AJG** Well, "walking in truth" is just what we are saying, that everything in our walk is rightly regulated, there is nothing out of balance or out of proportion in it. But "walking in the truth" is that our walk, of course, is governed by the light in which God is known.

**AH** Is John very particular about that kind of thing, practically, as seen in the way he refers to the report that had got round amongst the brethren? It then says that he himself is true, "his witness is true" (John 21: 24)?

**AJG** That is striking, because that is one of the most distressing features of the present time, inaccurate reports among the brethren.

**JTS** In Zechariah 8: 8 we have "I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness" and then later, verse 16, "speak truth every one with his neighbour; execute truth and the judgment of peace in your gates." Then

again, verse 19, "Love ye then truth and peace." This is to reach a glorious climax, is it not? Are these the matters we are at at the present time?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right and I am very thankful for this emphasis on truth, not only *the* truth, but *truth*. I believe it begins with our facing exercises with God, as David did in Psalm 51, that God *will* have truth in the inward parts, and the Spirit, having taken up His abode in us, is one of the greatest helps to the maintenance of that.

**EJH** Has it not been said that we may speak the truth and yet not speak *truth*?

**AJG** Well, we can speak things that are verbally true, and yet, as you say, it may not convey the truth.

**EJH** Is that not a very dangerous thing?

**AJG** It is, a baneful thing.

**HW** Referring to your remark a minute ago about false and inaccurate reports getting about, there is a solemn word at the beginning of Exodus 23 "Thou shalt not accept a false report." Are we not under obligation to investigate every report that is suspicious that comes to us with regard to any of the saints?

**AJG** That is so. But even apart from anything that is false or anything that has evil intent in it, there is a great deal of need of watchfulness to be accurate in what is said.

**AGH** Would reference to Exodus 18 help, please, it speaks of "men of truth"?

**AJG** That is in keeping with what we are saying. That is what Jethro recommended to Moses.

**AGH** Yes, "Do thou provide among all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."

**AJG** That is exactly in keeping with what we are saying.

**JSE** How does this all bear upon Peter's expression, "the present truth"?

**AJG** What we have been saying as to "truth" and "truth in the inward parts" is a matter of right moral conditions, but "the present truth," of course, is that particular feature of the truth (that is what has come out in revelation) which the Spirit of God is particularly pressing upon the saints.

**JSE** So that this "lady" would be marked by the feature of forward movement as the Spirit developed things amongst the saints. In that way she would have

power to carry out the instruction as to those who came to her and were not to be received in the house?

**AJG** Quite so. *They* are said to go forward, and they go forward in a wrong way; they go forward as adding to that which was from the beginning, whereas we have to maintain what is from the beginning, which is what this epistle says, "this is love, that we should walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment, according as ye have heard from the beginning, that ye might walk in it." That has to be maintained, but then there is always the particular feature of the truth that the Spirit is emphasising from time to time and we want to move forward with that, so as to be preserved in the truth.

**EuR** In 3 John 3 we get "I rejoiced exceedingly when the brethren came and bore testimony to thy holding fast the truth, even as *thou* walkest in truth," but in verse 4, "I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth." Would you say a little as to that, "in truth" and "in the truth"?

**AJG** I think verse 3 is extremely important because the brethren bore testimony to Gaius, and to his holding fast the truth, even as he was walking in truth. If we do not walk in truth we shall find we are not able to hold fast the truth. Sooner or later we shall trip up over the truth, if we are not concerned as to walking in truth. But then John goes on to say "I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth," and that is the way to maintain the truth in testimony, to walk in it.

**PL** So that moral defection often underlies opposition to the truth?

**AJG** That is so.

**JMcM** Would walking in truth be the result of walking in the light as God is in the light?

**AJG** Yes, I am sure that is so, because "that which makes everything manifest is light." Light makes everything manifest, and thus, as subject to it continually, we are held in what is morally right, we walk in truth.

**HFR** The truth is said to be the fruit of the light in Ephesians 5: 9.

**AJG** Yes, that is very interesting, "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

**APT** In connection with the reference to moral defection, the third epistle is evidence of it. John says "I wrote something to the assembly; but Diotrephes,

who loves to have the first place among them, receives us not." Is there something in that?

**AJG** Quite so. That was the moral root that underlay the opposition, and the Spirit of God exposes it.

**AWGT** I was wondering if the expression "the upright" is in keeping with truth? In Deuteronomy we get "the upright people." Would that be in line with what we are saying about speaking truth?

**AJG** Yes, quite so.

**AWR** In Amos 7 Jehovah is seen standing on a wall with a plumb-line in His hand and then He says, "I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel" and then "I will arise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

**AJG** Well, that is similar in principle, the plumb-line is the assertion of what is right, it is upright or vertical. It is the assertion of the principle of righteousness, and there is a wall. That is, the Lord is showing that the principle of righteousness maintained works out in practical separation; it is really the assertion of the principle of 2 Timothy 2. It is in those who are governed by the principles of 2 Timothy 2, that the Lord is maintaining a testimony against Christendom.

**ECM** Is that not brought out in Malachi 2: 6 "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips"?

**AJG** Yes, "the law of truth." Quite so.

**WSS** The house is an important element here. Is it not a very important matter the way a household is held in relation to the truth?

**AJG** It is a very important matter.

**WSS** I was thinking of our brother's reference to the fortress and I wondered if our households are to be a kind of fortress where the truth is held and the enemy is held at bay, so to speak?

**AJG** Hence the need, not only of reading the Scriptures in the house with the family, but also of speaking over them as matters come to our notice, speaking of them in their moral character, do you think?

**WSS** Yes. I was thinking that and also what you were referring to earlier in connection with the saying that went about among the brethren. Have we not need of much care in regard to what is said in our homes, in regard to what is current among us?

**AJG** Yes.

**WSS** We are perhaps apt to be a little more careless talking in the family circle, than we are when speaking in the meeting, for example. Do we not need great care all the time in dealing with the matters of truth?

**AJG** I am sure that is a salutary word.

**PHH** The matter of deception comes in here prominently, verse 7, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh - this is the deceiver and the antichrist." Is that the particular attack and is that the particular matter which needs to be met in the defence of the truth? I was just thinking about Absalom's movements, in his beauty and attractiveness as diverting David's people - and insidiously wanting to put himself in office, so to speak. Would that kind of thing need to be guarded against with us?

**AJG** Yes, I am sure of that. The word 'deceiver' shows that the enemy's effort is to deceive the saints, and then "the antichrist" shows that his objective is to displace Christ, he is against Christ. That is the character of this kind of doctrine; there are many false doctrines that are abroad now, deceiving the saints and opposed to Christ.

**PHH** It says later on that there were many men who went after Absalom in their simplicity. Is there necessity, therefore, for us to be built up in the truth?

**AJG** Quite so, and to see that the test as to "Jesus Christ coming in flesh" is applied to what is presented.

**PHH** Would you just speak about that; I mean we have had it, but what does it mean in this setting?

**AJG** I think it is similar to what we had in chapter 4 when we were on it; it is the question of the essence of what is presented in teaching. It may have an attractive appearance, it may have the appearance even of what is authoritative because Scriptures are quoted. We have to see what the essence of it is, as to whether it confesses the true deity of Christ and the true manhood of Christ and the absolute need for the setting aside of the first man. All that, I believe, is involved in "Jesus Christ coming in flesh."

**EJH** Have not many of our sisters to meet this deception at the door, while their husbands are away?

**AJG** That often happens.

**AHG** Would that setting aside, of which you speak, be involved in this "doctrine of the Christ," verses 9, 10 and 11 bringing in this matter of doctrine?

**AJG** Yes, I think it is involved, because, as we said before, there is only one Christ, *the* Christ, and that is exclusive of every other man. Everything thus that is of God now is to be gathered up in the Christ and to take character from Him.

**APCL** In verse 8 it says "See to yourselves"; does he widen out to include the children in that? It is a plural matter, so that it is not only "the elect lady" answering for them, but are they not brought into the matter?

**AJG** I would think so. As you say, he is addressing not only the elect lady, but her children, "See to yourselves, that we may not lose what we have wrought, but may receive full wages." That is a remarkable consideration to put before the saints, that the labourers who present the truth to us are looking for full wages, judged according to results of their work.

**APCL** It seems to suggest a community in the house corresponding somewhat to the community amongst the saints?

**AJG** Yes, I would think that.

**AH** Does Paul guard against this in 2 Timothy 3 where he speaks of persons "getting into houses" and then goes on and says "in the same manner in which James and Jambres withstood Moses, thus these also withstand the truth," as if they are doing it first of all in the houses?

**AJG** Well, that is significant.

**WC** Would not the reverse be profitable too, to welcome the brethren who can bring the right doctrine? Would that help the children in strengthening the position in the household?

**AJG** That is very good. There is nothing like letting the children have intercourse with the saints, and bringing those who are worthy and spiritual into the house.

**ABP** Households like this would be seen established in Acts 16, would you say?

**AJG** I would indeed. So that when Paul and Silas are released from prison they go to Lydia, do they not?

**ABP** Yes. Do you think that Lydia was taking on current ministry and opening her house to what was right? The jailor is influencing his house; he "rejoiced householdly."

**AJG** Quite so. Lydia proves the worth of her house to be entered into by first having attended to the things spoken by Paul.

**GRC** So do our households afford scope for working out of the new commandment according to verse 5? Practical love amongst the saints works out a good deal in hospitality and care in the homes?

**AJG** It does, and along with that is the need of very great care in regard of the truth and not allowing what is contrary to it.

**GRC** I was thinking that, so that the idea of an open house, in the sense of letting anything in, is not exactly right?

**AJG** No. It is open to those who go forth for the name, as we have in the third epistle.

**GWB** Do not the tents of Dathan and Abiram figure significantly in connection with the rebellion, in Numbers 16? I was wondering too, on the other hand, whether the blessing through Balaam in connection with the tents and the tabernacles would show what is open to us?

**AJG** Quite so. It says "Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the entrance of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones." The word to the assembly was "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye perish in all their sins." It is as though any uprising against Christ, or against the truth, tends to influence the whole household and all that is connected with it.

**PHH** "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be. Blessed above women in the tent!" - the way she dealt with the enemy? It says at the end of the song in Judges 5 "so let all thine enemies perish. Jehovah! But let them that love him be as the rising of the sun in its might. And the land had rest forty years." Would that fit into this a little?

**AJG** It would, I think. The evil was dealt with in the tent and the result was rest for the people of God.

**RGB** So is it not important to see that the local company is largely comprised of households and, therefore, the strength and integrity of the household make for the strength and integrity of the local position.

**AJG** That is very important.

**RJW** Was it not those of the house of Chloe who brought the report to Paul?

**AJG** Yes, and Paul not only makes mention of that house but he mentions the house of Stephanas, that they, not Stephanas, but *they*, the household, the family, had devoted themselves to the saints for service.

**WSS** It would be good if all our houses were like the Israelites' tents which faced the tabernacle. If all our houses had an assembly outlook, and there

was always found an assembly outlook in our homes, it would be good, would it not?

**AJG** Yes, and governed by the thought of serving God acceptably continually.

**WSS** Yes.

**PL** Would you extend this reference to the threatened invasion of households to books as well as to persons?

**AJG** Yes, certainly. What have you in mind?

**PL** Well, the menace which present worldly authors furnish in the introduction of what is false to Christ?

**AJG** Quite so. It may not be openly opposed to Christ, but it always makes much of man and his world, does it not, and therefore it really has the effect of displacing Christ and the things of God.

**GAL** I thought what you were saying about the freely speaking of the things of God, of the holy Scriptures and the truth amongst members of the family, so that it is enjoyed as a part of our common heritage, is very important. One likes to feel that the children grow up in the truth as though it is part of their inheritance.

**AJG** Quite so, and yet we need to be watchful that they are spoken of in a holy way, do we not?

**GAL** Exactly.

**HDT** When you referred just now to reading the Scriptures, you added the word 'speaking about them.' You had something, I expect, in mind?

**AJG** Oh! nothing specific; we do not want to be legal or lay down what should be done, but it is a good thing not only to read the Scriptures but to speak about them if possible and when there is opportunity, not merely in a formal, but in an informal way.

**HDT** Well, I was thinking that it is a custom in some parts that the Scriptures are read pretty well at every meal, but practically nothing is said about them. Often a little less read, and a little comment in the power of the Spirit, would be much more acceptable.

**AJG** Quite so. Then as things arise, or things come under notice in the world, or it may be what is met with at school, and so on, it is a great thing to see what the Scriptures have to say about them, do you not think?

**HDT** I do indeed.

**WSS** So in Deuteronomy 11: 19 it says, "Ye shall teach them unto your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou goest on the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," and so on. It is really the life, is it not?

**AJG** It is.

**GAL** And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom because of the ark of God. Is that not very important?

**AJG** Yes. It says in one scripture that the ark remained with the *family* of Obed-Edom.

**JH** Will you please say something about the greeting in addition to that? It is not only "do not receive him into the house," but "greet him not"; and then the solemnity of the word, "for he who greets him partakes in his wicked works." It is in contrast to "Greet the friends by name" and "The friends greet thee" to Gaius.

**AJG** I think that is very important, because we may get into the way of greeting lightly, but anyone bringing false doctrine is not to be greeted. You do not say 'Good-bye' to him. He just has to leave; you do not say 'Good-bye' to him, because 'Good-bye' means really, 'God be with you.' Nearly all these persons spreading literature, which may refer to Jehovah and that kind of thing, consistently deny the deity of the Son, do they not?

**AJG** Quite so.

**EuR** Is not that the great test?

**AJG** Well, the deity of Christ and the true manhood of Christ, and the necessity for the first man to be set aside; I believe we need to hold all that as the real test of the doctrine.

**EuR** There was a case in Sweden years ago of a sister who discerned that a man professing to serve the Lord among His people was characterised by bad doctrine, and the result was he was spoken to by the brethren and other meetings were informed and the saints were delivered from him. That would be a good illustration of a sister of this kind, would it not?

**AJG** It would indeed.

**JAP** Does this suggest that the whole scope of the truth has come out in the apostles?

**AJG** Yes, I think there is no doubt about that. It has all come out with the apostles, and what we are enjoying is the *recovery* of it, because it was almost entirely lost, and now we are enjoying the recovery of it.

**JSE** Is the emphasis not so much on what has come out, but the way what has come out is maintained?

**AJG** That is the important matter. Perhaps we might pass on now to the third epistle, because we get the positive feature of hospitality "wrought towards the brethren, and that strangers (who have witnessed of thy love before the assembly)" and so on.

**WHR** Would you say one word upon the 9th verse of the second epistle, as to the danger of going forward in a wrong way in connection with false developments of the truth, and what it is to have the Father and the Son?

**AJG** Those going forward in a wrong way are those who think that you can add to what came out at the beginning, and so they do not abide in the doctrine of the Christ. But then it says, "He that abides in the doctrine, *he* has both the Father and the Son." I take it, that means that you are kept in the enjoyment of the revelation of God in Christ.

**EJM** Does it link with the word in John 14 as to the Lord's promise to the one who keeps His commandment? The Lord says "my Father ... will come to him and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

**AJG** I think we referred to that a day or two ago. That really goes further than keeping His commandments; it involves keeping His word. "If any one love me, he will keep my word," the Lord says, "and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."

**FCH** In the first epistle it speaks of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in the second epistle it refers to the Father and the Son only; and then in the third epistle it refers to God. How does that bear upon the question of the Name?

**AJG** I would not like to think that the second epistle involves any lack of completeness. It says in the 9th verse, "Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, *he* has both the Father and the Son." That is the way in which God is known, as Father revealed in the Son, and, of course, you imply that it includes the Holy Spirit because it is by the Spirit that these things are made good in us.

**FCH** It leads up to God alone in the last epistle. I wondered if that linked up with what you had in mind, the ultimate being a question of what is of God.

**AJG** Quite so. But as regards "the Name" in the third epistle we could rightly say that that is the full name in which God is known.

**HB** What is the name? I was thinking of the verse where it says (3 John 8) "for for the name have they gone forth, taking nothing of those of the

nations.”

**AJG** That is just what we are referring to, that it is the truth of God now. The full light of Christianity is involved, I think, in what was in their hearts in going forth. It is a remarkable expression, “the name,” by itself. As far as I know, we get it only once more in Scripture, and that is in Leviticus 24.

**FCM** Could we have a word on what is said, “Gaius, whom I love in truth.”

**AJG** That is in keeping with what we have been saying as to the importance of “in truth.” It is not only in the truth but “in truth,” “whom I love in truth,” and “as *thou* walkest in truth.”

**PHH** Would you say some more about the going forth “*for the name*.” The name is given to us in full, I suppose, in Matthew 28, and there is a question of baptising to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Does this mention of the name mean that it lies behind their going forth, the power of it and the leverage for it?

**AJG** I think it means that it enters into their testimony. Their service has in view the name, that is, the spread of the knowledge of God as He is now known.

**WC** Is the idea of “going forth” a levitical thought? According to the end of Mark it says that they went forth.

**AJG** Yes. That is how I understand it.

**WC** Would it link on with the care of the Levites?

**AJG** Yes, clearly. Here these have gone forth, like those that we read of in Acts 8, who went forth on their own initiative. These went forth, dependent on God, taking nothing of the nations.

**GRC** In Acts 5 it says the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the name.

**AJG** I suppose that would be probably for the name of Christ.

**GRC** I wondered there whether it was the name of Jesus, showing that He has a peculiar place in the testimonial sphere, that His name is called *the* name. He is God, is He not?

**AJG** Yes. I am glad you have drawn attention to that, because I had overlooked that expression in Acts 5: 41, “that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the name.”

**WCP** Would you mind saying, please, what is meant by “the excellent name” in James 2: 7, “Do not they blaspheme the excellent name which has been

called upon you?"

**AJG** "Name ... called upon you," I suppose, refers to the name that was called upon them at their baptism. What would you say to that?

**WCP** I was wondering just that myself.

**WC** It does say in Acts 5: 40, "enjoined them not to speak in the name of Jesus," and then it says in the next verse, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the name."

**AJG** Yes. That is why I think it evidently is the name of Jesus there.

**AHG** Would this going forth here for the name be in all the wealth of what had been acquired in the house setting and also in the assembly that is referred to here, so that it is the full wealth of the name that they go forward in?

**AJG** It would be supported, of course, by houses such as those of the elect lady that we have been speaking of, but the name, I take it, is the testimony, it is what is here. It is the testimony as to the way God has come out, and that was what they went out for, they went out to carry it and to spread it.

**WC** Does this indicate to us that there would be those thus going forth to the end to minister the full truth, but at the same time there would be opposition. John goes on to speak of Diotrephes not receiving them.

**AJG** Exactly.

**WC** We ought to receive them, but is that a test as to the ministry in its full bearing, and how it is received - whether it is in localities or houses?

**AJG** Quite so. If God has given any of us houses, they are houses that are to be held in relation to His testimony, and are to be available on the line of impartiality, receiving those who are bound up with the truth.

**EJH** And they are said to be "fellow-workers with the truth." Is that not a very great encouragement to the brethren generally, that if they have a living part in the testimony in any way they are not only helpers but they are workers with the truth?

**AJG** Yes, I think it is. "Fellow-workers with the truth."

**PL** Mark makes so much of sympathetic households in connection with the testimony, and it is the great levitical gospel, is it not? Has that a great place in our closing day, Mark appearing at the end of 2 Timothy?

**AJG** Quite so. I suppose Mark had been brought up to it by his mother, for his mother's house is referred to in Jerusalem. Peter went to it when he was

released.

**TJG** Would you say something about the two references to the assembly in this epistle, the one being the commendation of good qualities and the other the casting out of good qualities?

**WC** There are three, are there not? Verses 6, 9 and 10. Is it not remarkable, that these are the only times, I believe, that John mentions the word 'assembly' in his gospel and epistles? Would it link on with the last chapter of Revelation, the end there would be the assembly functioning universally? It is remarkable that he should mention it in this last epistle. There is the idea of the going in by the gates, into the city, in a present setting.

**AJG** Quite so. We get his mentioning the angel of the assembly in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation, but it is striking that while he stresses the family side of things in his first epistle and these epistles, yet he brings in the assembly here. They "witnessed of thy love before the assembly."

**PHH** Would that show that the condition of things you have been speaking about would affect the assembly, either for good, normally, or possibly for evil?

**AJG** Yes, and it shows that he is in no sense ignoring the assembly. He is dealing rather with what it is constitutionally in those who compose it, but now in this third epistle he formally recognises the assembly.

**APCL** Would that reference in verse 6 perhaps apply to things that might be very simply said, before a prayer meeting and the like?

**AJG** Well, quite so. We do not want to be formal about these things. They "witnessed of thy love before the assembly." You could not have a greater company than that to be commended to, could you?

**APCL** Quite so.

**AH** Would you add a word as to that remarkable expression "worthily of God"? Do you take it that he was providing them with the means for sustenance?

**AJG** Yes, I would think so. It looks as though they went forth dependent on God, and God honoured their faith through the saints. It is a great thing to be available to God for that. It is like the widow in 1 Timothy 5. We get very few marked by those features now, because there is so much in the way of State provision and so on, but in 1 Timothy 5 you have a widow who is desolate and has her whole confidence in God, and she is answered by the assembly; the assembly takes her on, and accepts responsibility for her. So that it shows how important the assembly is, as representing God in care.

**GAL** And would the "strangers" be brethren who may not have been known personally previously?

**AJG** Yes, I think so, as though the truth was just the bond between Gaius and those who came to him.

**CJHD** Would Genesis 18 give us an example of the setting forward worthily of God? Abraham says to his visitors, "refresh yourselves; after that ye shall pass on."

**AJG** That is good. Abraham there says, "Let now a little water be fetched ... . And I will fetch a morsel of bread; and refresh yourselves"; but actually he took "thick and sweet milk, and the calf that he had dressed," and so on. So that it was more than water and a morsel, was it not? He was treating them worthily of God.

**CJHD** And I thought it was in view of the passing on, and the great matters that were before God, we may say reverently - Sodom, but what lies beyond judgment, the glory.

**AJG** Yes.

**WSS** Do not these verses 6, 7 and 8 place a responsibility upon us in regard to our attitude towards the ministry and those who minister?

**AJG** Yes, they do indeed.

**WSS** We may look upon it as something belonging to a previous period, but is it not for the present time?

**AJG** Yes, it certainly is.

**EuR** Being with the truth calls for constant movement and adjustment?

**AJG** Yes, and fellow-workers with it. It almost seems as though the truth is presented as working, but we are to be fellow-workers with it.

**WSS** It is not optional, is it?

**AJG** No. It says, "*We therefore ought to receive such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth.*"

**EJB** A little while ago you spoke of what the Spirit was particularly emphasising in the truth, at any given time. Is that linked up with "the name" at the present time, the understanding of it?

**AJG** I think so. I think the Spirit of God is specially emphasising our getting into the fulness that is involved in the name, and reaching, in our own consciousness, God in His own blessedness.

**EJB** And it is a great thing to be fellow-workers with that?

**AJG** Quite so.

**CWC** In that connection I was wondering (if it would not be going back) if you would mind saying a word as to the expression in John 17, "the only true God." There has been an effort to make out that if the Father is the only true God, no one else can be.

**AJG** That will not do. That is met by the verse we had in the epistle this morning, "He "that is, God's Son, Jesus Christ - "He is the true God and eternal life." So that it will not do to take up one scripture to the exclusion of another.

**CWC** I was thinking of the expression as to the Spirit, guiding into *all* the truth.

**AJG** Quite so, "all the truth."

**ABP** Might there be a link here in the coordination of the truth and the ministry? Would Paul and his company be included in these? He speaks in Romans 16 of "Gaius, my host."

**AJG** Very possibly. It is clear that Gaius had entertained Paul.

**Ques** According to John 19 the Lord Jesus commended his mother to the care of John, at Golgotha, and John took her to his own home. Then we see the mother of Jesus in the upper room in the beginning of Acts. I am just wondering whether she was serviceable in the upper room, in the beginning of Acts, and whether that means that the truth would be found in John's home?

**AJG** Exactly, and I have no doubt she would be a great help to John. John would be a great help to her, in caring for her, but she would be an immense help to John, because she had wealth from her personal knowledge of Jesus from the very beginning that John could not possibly have.

**LF** You were speaking as to the matter of being fellow-workers with the truth, is there not instruction for us in seeing that immediately the matter of good and evil is raised, and that is to be taken account of in the only place where it can be dealt with in accordance with the truth, in the assembly itself.

**AJG** Quite so. You mean that in connection with this matter of working with the truth, immediately this opposition comes in with Diotrephes? Is that what you have in mind?

**LF** Yes, I was thinking that these matters really resolve themselves into one of two, good or evil, and that is worked out in the assembly. It seems to come in

wonderfully here in regard to what we have had so much before us as to the maintenance of "*the truth*."

**AJG** Quite so. It is striking that while John never calls himself an apostle this becomes an occasion for him to speak with authority as an apostle. He says, "For this reason, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, babbling against us with wicked words." It is very similar to Paul in the last chapter of 2 Corinthians. Paul speaks of his coming, and how he would deal with any evil that was unjudged. While therefore, whether in administrative matters or whether in the truth according to John's line, the Lord may wait long and bear long with opposition, sooner or later He will come into the matter and deal with it if it is not judged.

**PHH** And its being left like this, does it mean that it is giving us an opportunity to arrive at a right judgment about it?

**AJG** Yes, I think so. It is striking that apparently, in the very locality where Diotrephes was, there was Demetrius, setting forth, in his presence, the maintenance of the truth.

**ECL** Would you say that Demetrius had been formed by the truth? You were speaking at the beginning of the meeting of what was substantially in the saints.

**AJG** Yes, I think so. Demetrius is a most interesting man, because the apostle says of him that he "has witness borne to him by all, *and by the truth itself*" - the truth bears witness to Demetrius. In the ordinary way we might say that, Demetrius would be bearing witness to the truth, but here the truth is bearing witness to Demetrius. It is as though if you took account of the truth abstractly, and then looked at Demetrius, there would be no disparity between the two.

**TJG** Is it of interest that after having stated about Diotrephes, the apostle says, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil," as though the dominant personality of Diotrephes is dangerously infectious?

**AJG** Yes, that is so. So we are to go on with good, and we know good in God, and he that does good is of God.

**WC** Demetrius seems to be like a pillar, does he not? It does not say that he does anything, but it is what he is.

**AJG** Quite so.

**Ques** Does that bring out the importance of the local position especially in regard to those who serve, and who may not be borne witness to by the truth.

The position is held by the local assembly, and if persons go forth who are not fully committed to the truth, there is likely to be damage done. Then, on the other side, if they are fully committed to the truth there will be something for God in it.

**Rem** I think what our brother has in mind is that in our local positions we should be watchful whom we invite, because some are not fully committed to the truth, and if they are invited around they may do damage.

**AJG** That is important.

**APB** May I ask whether there is the other side, that the meeting from whom a servant goes forth to serve has a certain responsibility as to putting their hands on him?

**AJG** Yes, I think that is right. Although every servant stands in relation to the Lord in his service, yet he has his place in his own local assembly. So that the gifts are set *in the assembly*, it says in Corinthians; as though the assembly is there as having a certain oversight. It is not that the assembly directs them in their service, but at the same time they are accountable to it.

**AWGT** How can that work practically?

**AJG** If a servant was putting out what was contrary to the truth, and was not adjusted by the brethren personally approaching him, it would be his local company who would have to take it up.

**GRC** So that the assembly is "the pillar and base of the truth," and is responsible for what is put out, in that sense.

**GCS** Does that show the value of our care meetings? It is not one or two brothers, it is all the brethren?

**AJG** Quite so.

**GCS** Very often an objection comes from a brother perhaps that is not thought much of.

**AJG** That is what is so important, that we recognise that when all the saints are together there is abundant scope for the sovereignty of the Spirit. So He gives to one the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge, and to a different one something else. We cannot therefore dictate to the Spirit that He must use one or other particular brothers, but it is in His hand as to where the word of knowledge or the word of wisdom comes from.

**HDT** So that the Spirit dwells in the body, not merely in the gifts.

**AJG** Exactly, and you find that the body of the saints, taken as a whole, are for the truth, and with it.

**MPS** In Acts 14: 26 it says of Paul and Silas that "they sailed away to Antioch, whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled." Does that bear upon what has just been said?

**AJG** I think so. They came back to the assembly from which they had been committed, and they had fulfilled the work which was entrusted to them.

**APT** The fact that the word 'assembly' is mentioned three times here must have some spiritual significance. Is not the local position a very important matter?

**AJG** It is, and Diotrephes was even assuming to cast some out of the assembly. Yet in the presence of those conditions apparently, Gaius and Demetrius were standing, and you may rest assured that the Spirit of God will support those who stand by what is of God.

**APT** I was wondering if there was anything important in the statement "I wrote *something* to the assembly." It is not unfolded, but the truth is there. There would be the importance of John in this connection with the assembly, the authoritative side in it. The local brethren would appreciate what he had to say.

**AJG** I have no doubt they would, and if Diotrephes refused to receive John, there would be those in the assembly that would stand up against it sooner or later.

**JH-s** Is it significant in that regard that the word finally to the overcomer is, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies."

**AJG** That is to say, you lend an ear to what the Spirit is saying, and not to that which is contrary to it. He is saying it to the assemblies; that is, all the assemblies.

**APCL** In the initial sending forth of the servants in Acts 13, the assembly there having been constituted, there is the Spirit's distinctive selection and calling, and then the sending, but then do not the brethren come into it, "Then, having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go." In one sense they are sent forth by the Holy Spirit, but is there not something very definite in the responsibility of the local company?

**AJG** I think there is.

**WC** Does not this reference to "if I come" remind us of the principle of a time limit in relation to matters of evil?

**AJG** I think so.

**WC** That we are not to go on with things indefinitely?

**AJG** No. We have that same principle in Corinthians in relation to epistles that deal with administrative matters, and in this epistle of John in relation to family matters.

**MPS** Does it help to remind ourselves at the close that the apostle wrote all these things that our joy might be full?

**AJG** That is important, I am sure, that he has in mind that our joy should be full, and that is just as we are in the full light in which God is known and fully responding to it.

## **UNITY IN ASSEMBLY ADMINISTRATION**

*Revelation 21:14-18; Revelation 21:21; Revelation 22:3,4*

I shall doubtless have occasion, dear brethren, to refer to other scriptures, though not necessarily turning to them, but one would like to engage your interest in the description we have in this chapter of the assembly as it will be seen in millennial glory, understanding that what is set before us in this chapter represents what God is working to at the present time. It is important to keep in mind that the details that are given in this chapter of the assembly as the product of divine workmanship, are given us not simply as a matter of interest, but that we may see how far the conditions amongst us correspond with them now, and if not, that we should be concerned to accept any adjustment that may be necessary in order that the divine thoughts should be realised.

Now it is very striking that this description of the heavenly city should be given us in this place in the Scriptures, for the preceding chapters have shown us how completely God will carry everything through to completion. We find in chapter 18 that Babylon is judged and overthrown, the false system that attaches the name of God and of Christ to itself will be completely judged. Then in chapter 19 the Lord is publicly vindicated, the marriage of the Lamb comes and His wife who will then have made herself ready is there to enhance the occasion, but it is the public vindication of Christ. Then the Lord is seen coming forth in power and glory and the hosts of heaven following Him, and all that is opposed to Him is dealt with in irresistible power, the beast and the false prophet being taken and cast alive into the lake of fire. Then we find the public vindication of the saints, they are seen sitting on thrones, they are priests of God and of the Christ and they reign with Christ for a thousand years, that is the public vindication of the saints. Then there is the loosing of Satan, for a short period, after a thousand years, and the final test of man, and then the coming in by God in judgment and the great white throne and evil dealt with finally. Then after that there is the introduction of the eternal day, the tabernacle of God with men, and God shall dwell with them and be their God. So the Scriptures show us how completely, how unerringly, God can and will carry everything to a right conclusion, and that is an important matter for us, dear brethren, because the present moment is a moment when we should be concerned as to carrying things to completion, the truth is given to us and the Spirit is with us for that very purpose. Just as God shows that He will carry everything to completion, so He looks to us, at the present time, in our own spheres of responsibility, that is our own local assemblies, to see that things are carried to completion.

Well now, after all that, the Spirit of God gives us this remarkable description of the heavenly city, not in eternity, but in the day of glory, the millennium, and it is seen as a great vessel of divine administration, it comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Now to my mind it is very impressive that the Spirit of God, having carried things to completion, should, so to speak, go back and engage us with this wonderful description of what God is effecting in the saints at the present time, and bring it forward not so much in relation to the service of God, although, as I hope I may show, the service of God is not lacking, but bring it out as a vessel of administration. Now I say that, dear brethren, for this reason, that one feels for oneself, and I believe it is true for most of us, that we may have a fairly good knowledge of the truth and of divine principles and so on, but what tests us is administration, that is putting the truth and the principles we know into actual application, that is where we are tested, and a good deal of the ministry of the last several years has been on the lines of administration, because it is in right administration that God is glorified. Hence the Spirit of God, as I say, goes to some pains to describe to us this beautiful vessel, this full expression of the glory of divine workmanship in a vessel which is capable of "coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." What I understand by that is that the influence that the saints will wield in that day will be an influence of holy love, that God will be seen in all that is done, we are to understand that administration will be actual, there will be the reigning over cities and so on given to one and another, but in the world to come the administration will be from heaven and it will be by means of the assembly. As we were seeing this morning and this afternoon, it is seen as a great vessel marked by immense substance, the measurements of the city being given in order that they may convey to our minds the idea of immense substance. Hence the importance, beloved brethren, of acquiring and developing in substance, substance that is of God, and substance that is really of God is just found in the measure in which we are formed in love, as indeed it says in Corinthians, if I "have not love, I am nothing."

Well now, it has often been remarked that the number twelve is prominent in this chapter, constant repetition of twelve, and that is to impress us with love in unity, all the influence and administration of this vessel in that day will be in love, but in unity, a most important matter, beloved brethren, because God is one, and therefore the vessel that is to be expressive of God must be expressive of unity, must be expressive of love, but love in unity, and so twelve is taken up in Scripture as a number intended to convey administrative ability in love operating in unity. Twelve, as we know very well, and I only repeat it to make the point clear, is easily manipulated; you can have twelve ones, or six

twos, or four threes, or three fours, or two sixes, but whatever you have it is still the twelve, in unity, but in wonderful adaptability to the needs of the moment, and that is characteristic of love, love is never rigid, love is never legal and hard, love is easily adaptable, while maintaining the truth it is easily adaptable to the conditions that have to be served. How wonderfully adaptable the Lord Jesus was to the needs of the disciples. He would go any length to serve them in love. He would lay aside His garments, and take a linen towel, and gird Himself, and then pour water into a basin, and wash the disciples' feet, every one of them in turn, and wipe them with the linen towel with which He was girded. He wanted to leave an impression of love, He wanted to give them something that would form them, so that these things should not be simply doctrines or theories, but that they should become substantial in the saints, thus fitting them for the day when we are to come down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

I would call attention, first of all, to what it says as to the foundations, "the wall of the city" it says "had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." That is, the ministry of the twelve is connected with the foundations of the wall. The ministry of the twelve was largely connected with the testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it says in Acts 4: 33, "with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"; now that is not simply witness to a fact - it is a fact, of course, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, a most important fact, a fact that is abundantly attested, but it is not only a fact - it has a great moral import, because the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was "resurrection from among the dead," it was a selective resurrection and involved that God had taken up out of death the Man Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Man who pleased Him, and had rejected every other man. Now we well know that, dear brethren, as sound teaching, but has it really laid hold of us? Because that is the first great feature in the building of the walls of this city, the walls are for the protection of what is within, and the first great feature in the wall is this understanding of the complete rejection by God of every other man and His approval of the Man Jesus Christ shown in His having raised Him up from among the dead. That is to be wrought into our souls, dear brethren, in a very real way, manhood that is approved of God is only learned in Jesus, the fact that He is called Jesus Christ simply means that He is the anointed or approved of God, Jesus is the Christ. We read in the epistle of John that some denied that Jesus is the Christ, but it is of the utmost importance to accept that *Jesus* is the Christ and give it power in our souls, that is that we want to be in line with God and to allow no other man in a practical way than that which is according to Jesus Christ. How much trouble would be saved, dear brethren, in our own lives and

in our localities if this truth was really laid hold of and worked out, if no other man was allowed to have place. Jesus was a Man who sought only the will of God, who sought only the glory of God, who was characteristically obedient and characteristically dependent, there was purity of motive in all that He did, and the motive was that God was in all things to be glorified, and so we can well understand what an immense thing it is, if this is laid at the foundation. Indeed we know that Paul went to Corinth with that in his mind, determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and we read in Ephesians also "Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone." Now that is a matter of great importance, beloved brethren, and I need not enlarge upon it, but I only urge it on us all, because the wall, as I say, is what is for the protection of what is inside the city; the city itself, it says, is "pure gold, like pure glass," see how the purity is emphasised, the city itself is "pure gold," that is, the city itself conveys impressions of what is divine, gold speaks of what is divine and this is "pure gold," it is the glory of God shining untarnished by means of all that is done by the city. And when we say by the city, dear brethren, do not let us lose sight of the fact that the city is composed of the saints, that each one of us has his part in this, we do not want to lose sight of that, although it is the idea of a city, an entity, one great vessel of divine influence and glory, yet in fact it is composed of the saints, and hence we must see to it that the features that mark the city find place each one of us with ourselves. The city, it says, is "pure gold, like pure glass."

And now I pass on to the gates, because this is a matter of very great importance, beloved brethren, at the present time. It says, "the twelve gates, twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl," so that from whatever direction the city was approached anyone seeing it would get the same impression, at whatever point administration took place, at whatever point judgment was exercised according to God, the same feature would be seen; it says, "the twelve gates, twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl." Now each of our local assemblies, beloved brethren, may be rightly likened to a gate of the city. In our localities matters have to be dealt with, administration has to proceed, matters as they arise have to be judged according to God; are the same features and the same principles governing us in all our localities? If not, to the extent that it is not so this feature of the city is lacking. There is a tendency in some places - you will bear with me for saying it - to a certain independence of outlook, a preparedness to adopt a private view or a local view in contrast with that which the Lord has made general among the saints; well, that is out of keeping with this thought of the city. It is an important matter that these things should be faced, sometimes people say, 'we must see it before we

adopt it,' but then why not see it if others see it? In the book of Numbers we read that when the people of God were to move forward, first of all the cloud moved and I suppose priests, at any rate, would be on the look-out to see when the cloud moved, then the priests had to sound an alarm, and when they sounded the alarm the camp on the east had to move, then they sounded a second alarm and the camp on the south had to move, but there is no word about sounding a third alarm - surely two soundings of alarm should be sufficient to set all the people in movement in their due turn, and even if they had not heard the alarm, or had not paid heed to it, surely they can see that their brethren are moving. If two camps have moved surely the third camp should move, and then the fourth; there is no idea of independence of outlook among the people of God, they all had to move together, even though only two alarms were given all four camps had to move, had to move in a divine order, and if they did not move they would break up the unity of God's people, and destroy the testimony and God's pleasure in them. Now this is an important matter, beloved brethren, and the Lord would really call our attention to it, the great danger of independence of outlook and private or local thoughts causing the brethren in some parts to abstain from following that which the Lord is giving to the saints as a whole, and setting up, it may be, private customs or independent thoughts.

You remember in the history of Gideon - and Gideon's history largely links with the truth connected with the local assembly, and runs alongside the epistles to the Corinthians - that Gideon gained a great victory and the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, were slain, but then there still remained something to be done, the kings Zebah and Zalmunna had still to be overthrown. And Gideon came to Succoth and he asked the men of Succoth to give bread to his army, he said, "I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna," and the men of Succoth said, "are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in thy hand, that we should give bread to thine army?" They were not at all in line with Gideon, they were not following up what Gideon was doing, and so Gideon turned from them and went on without them, but he said, when I return "I will thresh your flesh with thorns of the wilderness and with briars." Then he went to Penuel, and the men of Penuel answered him in the same manner, and so Gideon had to go on without them. But God did deliver Zebah and Zalmunna into his hands, and when that was done and the matter was completed he returned to Succoth and seventy-seven elders were taught with briars and thorns of the wilderness, and then he turned to Penuel and broke down their tower and slew the men. The brethren will understand I am in no sense threatening, or chiding, or reproaching, but one would affectionately beg the brethren not to allow independence of outlook and thoughts and ways,

because sooner or later the discipline of God will overtake such as do so. God is bent upon unity among the saints, He is bent upon this feature, "twelve gates, twelve pearls," the same beautiful feature to be seen in every locality. The great beauty of the pearl is that it is wholly for Christ, it does not allow any element of independence, it refers to the assembly as marked by singleness of eye and formed under the influence of Christ, and that should be seen in every locality, and if it is not seen there is an interference with the unity which God looks for in His assembly, and an enfeeblement of what He intends should be produced as the result of His work amongst us at the present time.

Well now we might pass on in our thoughts to a further feature in the book of Judges, and I might say in passing that you will remember in Hebrews 11 the writer says, "What more do I say? For the time would fail me telling of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David and Samuel, and of the prophets." Now that is very remarkable, the Spirit of God refers to three pairs of men and in each case He puts the second one first, that is Gideon followed Barak, but the Spirit of God puts him before Barak, Samson followed Jephthah, but the Spirit of God puts him before Jephthah, David followed Samuel, but the Spirit of God puts him before Samuel. Now I believe the point in that, dear brethren, is that it is Gideon and Samson and David that are prominently in the mind of the Spirit, and that Barak and Jephthah and Samuel were brought in in order to pave the way respectively for Gideon and Samson and David.

Now let us consider Jephthah in that light, as brought in to pave the way for Samson, for Samson, I do not doubt, refers to the recovery of the highest features of the truth. The reason I say that is this, that in the appearing which was given to Samson's parents, they were visited by one who said that his name was "wonderful," he said "How is it that thou askest after my name, seeing it is wonderful?" It really points on to our Lord Jesus Christ as brought before us in the gospel of John, where the glory of the Person of Christ is so emphasised. He is indeed "Wonderful," and not only was the name of this angel of Jehovah Wonderful, but it says "he did wondrously, and Manoah and his wife looked on."

Now all that is very suggestive of the gospel of John, for if you follow the gospel of John you will find that the Lord Jesus does wondrously, and so wondrously that it calls for contemplation; contemplation is a great feature in the gospel of John, "we have contemplated his glory." Manoah and his wife looked on, they were held by that which they observed. You follow the Lord in His movements in John's gospel, especially the power and dignity in which He goes into death and disposes of it, and then rises out of it, and then ascends,

as He says, "to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God," see the glory of those movements, they are movements to be contemplated, and it says "the Angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar; and Manoah and his wife looked on," that is to say, it is as contemplating the movements of Christ culminating in His ascension that we get led into the highest features of the truth.

But now, as I say, Jephthah comes in as preparing the ground for that, and in what way? I believe it is that Jephthah in his history sets forth the truth of headship in the wilderness. You remember that Jephthah's conflict was in the land of Gilead, that is, on the east side of Jordan, it was still the wilderness, the territory given to the people by the conquest of Sihon and Og, it was a wilderness position, and when the men of Gilead sent for Jephthah to come and be their saviour, they said to him, "Therefore we have returned to thee now, that thou mayest ... be head over all of us the inhabitants of Gilead," and he said "shall I be your head?" and they assured him that he should be their head, and it says he became head and captain over them. Headship in the wilderness is emphasised in Jephthah's history, and that links with the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11, which is a matter of headship in the wilderness, having in mind the assembly, and the order in the assembly, and the bringing in of the element of subjection in the assembly, in order that we shall be able to move into that which is most precious as following on the Supper.

Well now the beginning of 1 Corinthians 11 is a scripture over which there has been much contention in the past, and it may be still some hesitation or reserve on the part of some, but it is an important element in the truth, dear brethren, if we are to reach the greatest features of the service of God, headship in the wilderness position, the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. What an important matter that is, that the element of subjection is to be seen in the man as holding Christ as his Head, and in the woman as holding the man as her head, what a word that is for us brothers, dear brethren, as to whether in point of fact we hold Christ as our Head, as to whether we look to Him for influence and impulse, whether our exercises are to take character from Him. We need to do that in order to have more influence ourselves. But then in regard of the sisters, God has placed them in a position of subjection and, therefore, He requires not only that they should be covered in "praying or prophesying" but that at all times there should be authority on their head, because of the angels, in order to show that they acknowledge this principle of subjection. If the chapter is read carefully, in the light that the whole position is one of headship in the wilderness, the sisters will, I am sure, see that it requires that there should always be something on the head that recognises

on their part that they are under authority. It says in that very passage "neither is woman without man, nor man without woman, in the Lord," and "in the Lord" is not simply when you are praying or prophesying, "in the Lord" covers the whole of our position as in responsibility here, and so the whole position of headship is to be recognised if there is to be any power to move into the greatest features of the truth. We know that in the case of Jephthah's history it involved great sacrifice for his daughter, but the spirit of his daughter was beautiful, she was ready for sacrifice, whatever it entailed for her she was ready for it, seeing that God had given the victory over their enemies she was ready for it, she becomes an example for the sisters to see that in every way the principle of headship in the wilderness is recognised by them.

Now the element of subjection which that calls for is a very important element in the assembly, and will help us in practical subjection to the Holy Spirit, and so we may hope to arrive in greater power and liberty at the highest features of the service of God in the assembly. Samson's history would bring that before us, not only that it is there objectively in what his parents were allowed to see in the Angel of Jehovah who visited them, but also in what is to be learned from his own personal history, especially after he failed, when it says the hair of his head began to grow again.

Now the great enemy in Samson's day was the Philistines, and it is the Philistines, dear brethren, which we need to fear. In this day when the Spirit is emphasised I am sure our great danger is the Philistine element in ourselves, that is to say the attempt to seek to compass the truth of God by our own mental energy and activities, instead of being exercised in increasing degree to give place to the Spirit of God, who will teach us the truth and lead us into it, so that we not only understand it in the Spirit, but are able to move in it in the Spirit, that is the essential thing. And, therefore, Samson's history illustrates that latter feature, it is a question now of developing power in life, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven, and it culminates in this, that he overthrows more Philistines in his death than in his life. If we would get the full gain of the Holy Spirit of God we must understand that it involves, in a practical way, acceptance of death, but in that acceptance the power of the Spirit becomes a known thing.

Well now there is one thing more, beloved brethren, which I would touch upon; I have sought to speak of certain elements among us which tend to hinder the full realisation of the thoughts of God. Let us bear in mind the thoughts of God as we get them in this chapter, and especially as I have said the "twelve gates, twelve pearls," it says "each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl" each one, not a single locality different from another, that is

the idea, that is something, beloved brethren, to take account of. It is not unknown amongst us that in some places things may be done by just a few brothers, holding meetings among themselves, doubtless bringing things to the Care Meeting, but at the same time holding things among themselves as though they were elders and entitled to act as elders independently of the assembly, but that is not according to the truth; if we read Acts 15, when a matter came up for consideration, it says the apostles and elders were gathered together in relation to the matter, but as we read on we find that the whole multitude was present, the authoritative and experienced element was there, of course, in the apostles and elders, and doubtless they would have most to say, or at any rate most to say that was of any value, but at the same time the whole company was there. How are we all going to learn, how are the sisters going to learn, dear brethren, to judge the world and judge angels, if they do not have a living part in all the administration that has to take place in the assemblies, that is why the sisters have been brought in to the Care Meetings, because there is to be formed this great vessel of divine administration, and all the saints are to be fitted to have their part in it. And so, if things are held in the hands of a few it is a disregard of the truth of the assembly, it is important that it should not be regarded lightly, it is really sin in the things of God, and should be forsaken and confessed as such, because it is militating against the truth of the assembly and it is militating against the sovereignty of the Spirit too. We read in 1 Corinthians 12, where it speaks of the sovereignty of the Spirit "to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge ... to another discerning of spirits" and so on, it does not mean that the Spirit must give it to one or another of six or seven or eight brothers, who may have assumed authority among themselves, we must recognise the assembly, and the sovereignty of the Spirit in the assembly to give help by whomsoever He is pleased to use.

And so, dear brethren, bear with me for referring to these things practically and outspokenly, but it is with the single desire that we should all embrace the truth, and that the features of the assembly that are set before us in this scripture that God is looking for, should be practically found in expression in all our localities. The elders have indeed their place, do not let us think that the elders have not their place, the elders are to be treated with honour, and they certainly have a place of influence, but their influence is derived not from their having a kind of "official" position, but it is derived from what they are, and by the way they love the saints, and by the way they serve them and exemplify the truth and commend it, that is where the power of elders lies. If you will notice Acts 20, where Paul addresses himself to the elders of Ephesus, he says, "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy

Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God," "wherein," that is *in* the flock, that is where the elders are, "in the flock." "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers"; that is the Spirit taking account of His own work in the souls of different ones, the love that is there, the care for the saints that is there, and the Holy Spirit brings them forward as qualified and able for the position of eldership, but they are "*in* the flock," do not let us forget that. And then Peter in writing to the elders says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am their fellow-elder ... shepherd the flock of God which is among you" that is, the flock is among the elders; according to Peter the flock is *among* the elders, according to Paul the elders are in the flock, in each case it conveys the idea of wonderful mutuality between the elders and the flock and nothing other than that. And so, dear brethren, let these things have place amongst us, let them work out, let the truth give any adjustment that may be needed in the way things are done, so that there may appear under God's eye that which answers fully to His thought according to this scripture.

And so we find in the verses we read at the close, "no curse shall be any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him," "his servants," that is bondmen, but they serve in a priestly way, but here we get an indication that in this great vessel of divine administration, what is, so to speak, giving it tone and power is that the service of God is maintained, maintained by those that are bondmen too, by those who are wholly given to these things, wholly given up to God and His will and His service. His bondmen shall serve Him, serve Him in priestly service, and shall "see his face; and his name is on their foreheads." They are in the full light of God as known in Christ, and His wondrous name, the name that is becoming so precious to us in these days, is on their foreheads, they stand out, they can be seen by anybody, identified with that name, they have the intelligence of it in their souls and in the intelligence of it they serve the blessed God. So that is what gives tone and character to the administration, that the service of God is carried on by those who are characteristically bondmen, but who are serving in the holiness and the intelligence that belongs to priests.

Well now it is this vessel, dear brethren, that is identified as the bride, that is to say, she is attractive because of her beauty, attractive to Christ, attractive to everyone who sees her, but that attractiveness can be only taken on by us, beloved brethren, as we pay heed to the features that the Spirit of God shows He intends to secure and as we are concerned that those features should find practical expression in the various spheres for which we are responsible. And so the book, we might say, closes with "the Spirit and the bride say, Come" -

the Spirit is there, and the bride is there in her beauty as wholly with the Spirit, no element of divergence, no element of contention against the truth, the bride is there marked by the beauty of complete subjection to the truth of God, and as such, she is able without the slightest hindrance to join with the Spirit in one word to the Lord Jesus and to say "Come." May the Lord help us in it, for His name's sake.

## **LIGHT, TRUTH AND PURITY**

*John 3: 21; John 8: 30 - 32; 2 Corinthians 7: 1*

J. S. Ephgrave As we have been able, brethren, to follow the course of our enquiry yesterday and today we cannot fail to have noticed the frequent allusions to light and the truth and purity and one has put these few verses together in the hope that the Spirit may register something with us in relation to these three matters, so that we do not remain barren or unfruitful, but we become marked by fertility that in our several places, where we live, we proceed on this substantial highway, coming to the light and being set free by the truth and purifying ourselves.

It is to be observed that the circumstances connected with these scriptures are peculiarly diverse, and that makes them all the more interesting to us.

Our first scripture is probably in the setting of a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, and the great matter for such a man as Nicodemus is to understand that now that Jesus Christ has come in flesh all the system with which he was connected is morally displaced and terminated.

And so the Lord puts this word to him, "he that practises the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God." Nicodemus is not here. Jesus is not here in the same way, but the Spirit is here and the Scriptures are here and the Spirit would use the Scriptures, brethren, tonight to make His voice heard by us, as to this matter of practising the truth. For it is to be practised and as we are ready to do that we are happy to come to the light, so that all about us may be manifested as being connected with God.

Something was said very strikingly this morning in relation to God, that the truth, and the light, have in mind that we are on the best of terms with God Himself. And that is a great matter for creatures like ourselves to think of, that it is within our reach to be on the best possible terms with God Himself by way of this principle of practising the truth and coming to the light.

Now the next incident is more public and we might say the Lord is in the setting of addressing a number of people and He selects for His focal words those who believed Him.

Now we might all say here tonight, thank God for it, that we do believe Him, and this is a great matter, that is "If ye abide in my word." This matter of "abiding," this feature of fixity, to which reference has been made, brethren, is of all importance in these closing dark and morally dismal days and our only safety lies in abiding in the expressed mind of God. That is what the Lord

Jesus is presenting to these people. He says "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."

There is power in the truth brethren, as we move on this line to liberate us from all that is displeasing to God and all that is in the way of our being fully here in relation to His pleasure, so that one would covet for oneself to be on this line of abiding in His word and being truly one of His disciples and being in this freedom, so that nothing holds one outside the circle of the truth.

Much has been said in recent times about our associations and relationships, but the Lord brings it into peculiar definiteness here as He brings the truth forward as the great power for our liberation from all these things.

Now in the third scripture it is part of a letter addressed to the saints in a certain place, and something is put upon us now in relation to purity. Ministry has been given, promises have been set out and involved in them is the great possibility of God Himself walking amongst us, being with us, finding His pleasure in being near to us, and the word comes now - "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves," as though the Spirit of God is putting an emphasis on the ability that is with us to take this matter up and see to it that we act with ourselves, in such a way, that there is nothing about us that is in conflict with the light or the truth.

So that this matter of holiness is perfected in "God's fear." One feels the importance of these words, dear brethren, and they have been summed up in the verse of our hymn 'The truth's pure light would we pursue,' (158:3) and the call today is for the pursuit of what is positive, so that there is more for God in our day than there has ever been before. More in volume, because there is more people, but more in quality, because the Spirit has a right-of-way with us, but much depends on ourselves as to what we are prepared to do as in the joy of what is pledged to us, on the line of promise.

I just felt free to put these scriptures together in that simple way, trusting they may be of service to all of us.

## ADJUSTMENT

*John 4: 16; John 8: 11; John 20: 17*

A. P. Taylor I am encouraged to refer to these scriptures, beloved brethren, and confirmed in it by what has already been before us today and yesterday. One has nothing prepared for the occasion, trusting in the Lord Jesus for a fresh word in relation to them.

One was impressed with the word last night. The trumpet was sounded once, twice. There is no reason, therefore, that because we may have had a scripture recently, that the Lord might not use it again the second time. We had this scripture recently in a small meeting nearby, and one is counting on the Lord's help for something fresh in relation to these three remarkable scriptures, all being connected with women, three women, three sisters. The Lord Jesus says in this book, "for this cause was I born" this cause - that I might bear witness to the truth - *the truth*. That is why I came - the truth. The incarnation was no afterthought with God; it was in His mind, in God's mind before time. And we have seen, beloved brethren, in the course of the testimony, that we needed adjustment in regard to the Lord's sonship; we have become settled in that matter. The Lord is very interested, too, Himself, that His place has been secured in the affections of the saints. He is also most desirous that the Spirit should have His place in our affections, and that is the closing feature of the truth - the Spirit of God. It is no use continuing a service like this, apart from the Spirit. No word has any effect apart from the Spirit of God. He is not only with us but He is in us. So that in a meeting like this, perhaps the most testing meeting (apart from the care meeting) that we have, the Spirit of God would revive us, so that we go away refreshed. So that I make an application, that the 20th chapter is the first day of the week, the 8th chapter the Saturday night, and the 4th chapter the meeting for ministry.

In each of these remarkable dealings, beloved brethren, the words occur, "Jesus says to her," and the Lord Jesus has a word tonight, He is still speaking. He is speaking from heaven, but He is speaking through the blessed Spirit here tonight, and He would have us hear the word of God. And our brother's remarks only consolidate, and confirm, what is in one's mind, that all of us might be the gainers from a meeting like this. We need the prophetic word, the word of God, for Tuesday night, the meeting for ministry. It is well that we should see that that is the night for the meeting for ministry. The great servant who is now with Jesus, departed to be with Christ, gave us the thought that the meeting for ministry was on Tuesday night, and I connect it, dear brethren, with the 4th of John - the Lord was wearied with the way He had

come. But as the episode proceeds, He is not weary, He is refreshed in speaking of the Father. He speaks of the Father, and the worship of God.

And I thought that in chapter 4 the Lord is speaking to a woman. He is speaking to the subjective element that is in our midst tonight. Beloved brethren, let us take it on, every one of us, one's self included, that we may be subject to the word of God. It is the prime feature of the moment, that we are to be subject to the word of God, the living and abiding word of God. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, it is piercing in its effect and it is to help us in our moral being. It is a prophetic word. And so the Lord meets this woman, and He at once removes all social distinctions. The Lord Jesus removes all social distinctions, dear brethren. It is a bane to the testimony that there should be any social distinctions amongst us; it is not warranted by Scripture. This woman would bring in social distinctions. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

The Lord Jesus speaks to this woman; He is seeking to adjust her. There were moral issues that needed adjustment, and in a meeting like this the Lord would speak to us on moral lines, so that the adjustments come; and He says, "Go, call thy husband, and come here." She says, "I have not a husband." You know, beloved brethren, we have to face these facts, we have to face moral issues; and the Lord says, "this thou hast spoken truly." The current ministry is to bring us to the truth, not half way. The woman came half way, and the Lord would say to her, "thou hast spoken truly." But she had not spoken all the truth. She had to learn the truth. We have to learn the truth, in the presence of God, what the truth is, it has to come out. If I do not agree with the ministry, let me come out with it! Let the brethren see where I am in relation to the truth God is presenting to us. Let us come out into the open, and if our wills are not active the Lord will help us. If our wills are active we will not receive help.

I commend it to you, dear brethren, the final five minutes of the last reading in the three-day meetings in this room, in 1953. What was it? Dear brethren, you have read the book, "The Worship of God." Those two pillars that Samson was by - what are they? My mind and my will. God will not go on with it. They have got to come down, my will and my mind. You will find it, dear brethren, if you read that book again. But if I want help in my soul, and I am not clear, and transparent in relation to the truth, you will find the difficulties are my will and my mind. That is what this chapter is. In this chapter the Lord was bringing out the truth, bringing it all out. "I see that *thou* art a prophet." Beloved brethren, what we need amongst us is the prophetic word, that reaches the issues amongst us, and the way to get help, beloved brethren, I

am firmly convinced, is that we are helped under the prophetic word, and if my will is not active and my insubject mind is not active, I will receive the blessing of God. So I say this, "Come, see a man ... ." Everything is settled. That is what we want to get to. Dear brethren, what we need is Christ. Everything, not something - Christ everything. That beloved Man! If we need help, "come, see a man." Everything is adjusted in relation to the truth.

Now chapter 8, dear brethren, is Saturday night, and it is another woman, but the Lord is not too sure of this woman. There is much that comes in amongst us in our care meetings. Jesus said to her, "Neither do *I* condemn thee - go, and sin no more." In the previous episode the Lord says, "Go, call thy husband." She never moved; she did not have to move from her seat. The idea is that God would help us where we are. It is a question of moral issues. In this chapter, the Lord is interested in those who are younger amongst us. The issue in the 8th chapter is the elders, the issue is with the Pharisees and the scribes. The issue in the 8th chapter is not the woman. When we come to the care meeting we have got to have the facts, and we have got to have the principles. A beloved servant of God, now with Christ, said, 'God says to us, I will take care of the persons, you take care of the principles.' This servant cannot be quoted too much, dear brethren. The Lord Jesus has something to say. What is He doing, so to speak? What am I doing? The Lord is showing us what to do. The Lord is not too sure of the woman, but what He is interested in is that He wants to be sure that all matters are handled rightly. That is what He wants. So they go out; they are all going out. The Lord is not dealing that way in the care meeting, dear brethren. Maybe I have a lot to say in the care meeting, but I am not helping. Why am I not helping? Because I am not following His example in this chapter, a most terrible chapter. The Lord is indicating at the outset of it, they were going to stone someone; at the end of the chapter they would stone Him. It goes home to us, dear brethren, just how things are operating. He stoops down, not once, He stoops down, writing. What are we to do, dear brethren? We have a critical situation in the care meeting, most critical. How am I going to help? Go down! Whom am I going to follow? The Lord Jesus! The Lord Jesus has settled everything for God. Every divine requirement has been settled in one Man and that is the model. The situation is saved. No one will have to go out. The position is saved; which reminds me, beloved brethren, of the last chapter of Ruth. In the last chapter of Ruth (you can look it up at your leisure) you will find the moral qualifications of a brother who brings things to completion on the principle that he has the facts and he loves the saints. That is Boaz. Not the mind or the will, but in him is strength. That is what Boaz is, strength. He brings the saints through. And not only is he who should have taken on the truth won, he

who says 'I cannot do it,' but he is carried through and all the people gave witness that day. The matter is brought to a final completion. And what is the top note in the end of Ruth? The service of God. He says to one man, "sit down here." He says to ten others, "sit down here." And they sat there. He presents the facts, all the facts in relation to the matter of Ruth and her inheritance, and the matter is settled according to God. So that even the man whose right it was, as next of kin, to settle the issue, is carried in the whole matter, beloved brethren; and that is what is needed amongst us, the ability to carry all the saints with us, on the principle of divine grace.

Now the last scripture gives us another woman. She is ready for the message connected with the first day of the week. We are ready for it, with every moral issue settled before God. The truth having a place in my affections, every moral issue is settled to completion.

Well now, in this chapter it is the last woman in the book, and the Lord says to this beloved woman - there are no moral issues with her - "Touch me not." You may be assured, beloved brethren, if affection for Christ is resident in your soul, individually, and you have difficulties, any difficulties, in relation to the truth, you will become adjusted in due time. There is no question about it. If your affections are right, you will get help in regard to every matter; and that is what Mary represents. She represents one whose affections were right in regard of Christ. She loved Him. "They have taken away *my Lord*." A subject woman! No moral issues there. She is ready for the service of God. And the Lord has a word with her. "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, ..."

Beloved brethren, we hear of this one and that one standing alone, in this day. The Lord says, "Go to my brethren." The Lord has not got a word for persons who stand alone in relation to the testimony, the truth. Do you want help, beloved brethren? I do. If there is one thing I do not want to do it is to get out of fellowship. "Go to my brethren." That is where I get the help, where we get the help, beloved brethren, what God has provided for us, the children of God.

These are just the simple thoughts that I had, but I felt encouraged just to present them to you as having done something for my soul. I trust they will do something for us all, for His name's sake.

## **"BINDING"**

*Genesis 37:5-7; 1 Samuel 25:29-31*

A. B. Parker The brethren will have observed that there is a link between these passages in the thought of binding. Joseph's comment about his dream was, "We were binding sheaves in the fields." And Abigail refers to "the bundle of the living." These expressions, I trust, will develop in what the Lord may give.

The character of these meetings is unique. More than on any other occasion brethren are together from various parts of the world and thus, representatively, these meetings are universal in character. This is important, for I believe we are not ignorant of Satan's effort to bring in sectional feelings; to attempt, by one means or another, to bring in division of outlook or thought. It seems timely, therefore, that we should consider how we can all contribute to this matter of binding together, in order that the position may be preserved intact, universally, until the Lord comes.

Early in the gospel by Luke the writer gives us a sign, which is rather unusual for Luke. We have a number of signs in John's gospel, but in Luke's gospel a sign is given to the shepherds. The angel said "This is the sign to you - ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger," Luke 2: 12. The Spirit of God, through Luke, would give us a sign so that we may not miss our way; that what is infinitely precious to heaven is preserved in the most unlikely place. Though it may be in smallness and in weakness, yet its preciousness is realised and it is bound up, wrapped, so to speak, in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger.

We may be affected, as together, by the number of those who are present, but many of us will return to places where what is of God is found in smallness. The Lord would indicate to our hearts, I believe, that this sign is to characterise our day; that what is infinitely precious to heaven is to be found in the most unlikely place, as far as the world's conjecture is concerned. And yet, it is to be held; it is to be preserved; it is to be cared for, as suggested by this tribute to Mary - that "she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling-clothes and laid him in the manger."

I would not wish, in any sense, to detract from the uniqueness of the birth of Jesus, but I believe that in this sign there is the suggestion that what is precious to heaven is to be preserved and cared for in our local settings; it is all to be bound together universally, of course, but it works out locally, and it is bound together with mother feelings. There is no suggestion of a midwife - I say it reverently. We can thank God for those with skilful and sympathetic

understanding who can help the work of God through - but here the power of motherhood is suggested, and this is greatly needed in our localities. Paul knew the need of it at Thessalonica; he was amongst them as a nurse with *her own* children, cherishing, yearning over them and imparting character and life to those new-born babes. These were features characteristic of motherhood. And thus Luke would write of binding together what may be outwardly weak, but infinitely precious.

And then as Luke proceeds with his narrative he gives us a parable which the Lord Jesus spoke, after which He said, "Go, and do *thou* likewise." What is set out in that parable is to be taken on by us, and it relates to binding; it has to do with recovery. There is a man in a half-dead state. He may have been pursuing his own will, but he had been caught in a trend. He was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho, but he was not the only one on that way; there was a priest on it too, and a Levite - indicating how *general* was the trend. How often we may, unwittingly, be caught in a trend like those two hundred men in 2 Samuel 15 who went after Absalom in their simplicity, not knowing anything. It is a terrible thing to be caught in a trend, but the Lord has in mind that there is to be power to bring about the resuscitation of such, and that involves binding. It is not now motherhood; it is a matter of bringing about resuscitation. Power is needed, and right feelings, too, because it says that the Samaritan had compassion! The priest, in his liberty to move amongst the brethren, seemed devoid of local responsibility. He may have said, I cannot go into details in specific cases. On the other hand the Levite was a local brother, for it says, " ... being at the spot." Yet, he was unable to deal with the matter. But the Samaritan, as he journeyed, "came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion, and came *up* to him." He was not on the way down to Jericho, he was travelling *up* to Jerusalem! It is only those who are travelling to Jerusalem, those who have the whole universal position of the testimony in their hearts, who rightly can take matters on in a locality. The Samaritan took the case on and bound up the man, pouring in oil and wine. He would bring to bear, we might say, the full power of the kingdom of God. Unless we move in the Spirit's power we can effect nothing for God. But the Samaritan bound up the man's wounds, pouring in oil and wine - speaking, I believe, of the essentials of the kingdom of God - righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The binding *must* be done in righteousness; if not, the wounds will break out again and there will be a worse condition than the first. But where righteousness enters into this binding, there will be peace and joy, too. The kingdom of God is not yet in display,

but it is here in mighty power and we are to use that power to hold things together righteously.

I would now refer to an incident at the end of the pathway of Jesus here, when the high priest uttered, prophetically, that one man should die for the people; John 11: 50. We are told that he did not say this of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied. Thus we see the pent-up feelings of God finding public expression, "that Jesus was going to die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he should also *gather into one* the children of God who were scattered abroad." What a reminder to us that no matter how hard we may labour, no matter how earnest our desires may be to carry on this binding, it all must be based on the precious fact that Jesus has died - that He *must* die that He should *gather into one* the children of God who were scattered abroad. Oh, to think that in this our day, the last hours of church history, God would speak to our hearts about gathering into one. The fact that it was the high priest that uttered this word - a man who was seeking to get rid of Jesus - only shows how deep the feelings of God were that His mind might find expression in the midst of all the hatred that was against Christ. But in our hearts, beloved brethren, there is no hatred against Christ, there is *love* for Christ, but we are in a day when the children of God are still scattered abroad. Thank God for those that are in the bundle of the living! Thank God for those that are consciously in the joy of being bound in a sheaf that remains standing! But we would have *all* the people of God in our hearts. They are *all* to be gathered at our assembling together unto Him, when "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" not one shall be left out! But in the meantime, with this in our hearts, we would seek to work out in power this matter of binding a sheaf that will remain standing.

Well now, as to Joseph's dream - no doubt his sheaf rising up looked forward to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but I think that we are justified in applying the general idea to our local exercises. Joseph would represent the idea of the ministry, I believe - what is to be effected through the ministry, for the sheaf, represents food. Joseph became the administrator of the food supply in Egypt. He was "Saviour of the world," indicating that the whole position, universally, was held intact through his skilful administration. Oh, how we need to have the universal position in our hearts, that the whole position may be held; that none may be lost. The Lord Jesus could say that of those whom the Father had given Him, He had lost none save the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Think of that wondrous sheaf which had been gathered to the bosom of Jesus and bound together! It remained standing! See it on the day of Pentecost - Peter standing up with the eleven - the sheaf remained standing! And it *will* remain standing. It was the nucleus of what is going right through! And we all want to be in it. But there is a danger

of *not* being in it. Other sheaves are being bound. Joseph's brethren were binding sheaves, too. Let us have no part in the binding of a sheaf that will *not* remain standing. His brethren could say, "We are all one man's sons; we are honest," Genesis 42: 11. They had bound a sheaf, but it was not complete; they had to say, "The youngest is this day with our father, *and one is not.*" In their binding, they had left one out! Let us not leave out one, let us hold *all* in our affections!

Joseph's brethren had taken offence at his dream. They had hated him before and now they were offended by his ministry. He had said, "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the fields, and lo, my sheaf rose up, and remained standing; and behold,

your sheaves came round about and bowed down to my sheaf." There are two parts to that, but his brethren could only see one part - that their sheaves were to bow down to his. Now it is important that we take on the ministry in its completeness. Joseph's brethren completely ignored the positive side of the teaching - that the sheaf that Joseph bound was to rise up and remain standing. That was really the crux of the ministry. That was the "word" that tried Joseph, as recorded in Psalm 105: 19. *That* word was not fulfilled when his brethren came and bowed down to him. He did not disclose himself *then* and say, My dream has come true! It was not until he could bind them together in a sheaf that remained standing that Joseph found the fulfilment of his dream. For thirteen long years it had been in his soul. There was a day coming when he and his brethren would be bound into a sheaf that would remain standing, a sheaf of Joseph's binding. So that when his brethren came down to him in Egypt he used his skill as administrator of the food supply to have all matters righteously adjusted so that the sheaf could be bound in righteousness. Later, he was greatly distressed lest there may have been some defect in the binding. When Jacob died, his brethren came to him again, saying, Behold, we are thy bondmen. They thought that when Jacob was dead Joseph would not be the same toward them. It says, "And Joseph wept," Genesis 50: 17. Think of the feelings of Joseph! Beloved brethren, we are to be bound together so that *nothing* can bring in separation and division. The sheaf is to *remain* standing. And, according to the teaching of this passage the binding is to be accomplished through the ministry - through administration of food with skill. Therefore, I suggest to those who have part in the ministry, in the service of the saints, that we use skill in the administration of the food supply. Whilst Joseph sets out the great example, his word is "Appoint overseers over the land ... for food in the cities," Genesis 41: 34. That is, the whole position is kept, but it is worked out locally. Joseph represents the great

idea of skill in the administration of the food. His brethren, though difficult, are won, and they are bound into a sheaf which remained standing.

I believe that in the days we have been together we have witnessed the skill with which the food supply has been administered. No one in this company, who needs adjustment, need go away without realising that adjustment is available to him, if he desires to be right. None of us need go back to our localities with any unsettled matters. The food has been administered with authority and with application. The Lord has been skilfully behind the administration of the food so that we can go back to our localities as fully unified and remembering the words of Joseph, "Do not quarrel on the way." We are to go to our local settings and work these things out, beloved brethren! Not just to tell our brethren that we had a very good time, but to work out the truth in a practical way.

The details in the scripture show the practical skill which Joseph used in bringing in adjustment. He immediately raised the question of the *brother*. And then he divided two brethren - Simeon and Levi. Jacob could say of them - "Instruments of violence their swords. My soul, come not into their council; mine honour, be not united with their assembly," Genesis 49: 5. In principle, he says, Let me never be in a care meeting where Simeon and Levi are! Never do I want to be in their council! "Scatter them in Israel." And so Joseph separates them, he "divides them in Jacob." He bound Simeon before their eyes when he sent the others home. He said, as it were, this matter will go better if Simeon is not with Levi when the brothers go back to work things out. And so we need to break up parties and the tendency to party spirit. They are affinities in cruelty, because party spirit leads to cruelty, it leads to death. We need to be delivered from party spirit and see that the affinities which bind us together are *family* feelings; feelings which hold together what is precious to heaven. And so I leave Genesis with the idea in our minds, I trust, that the Lord will help us to be concerned that in our ministry we administer the *food* supply with a view to bringing about healthy conditions amongst us and binding the saints together. The Lord spoke of administering a portion of food in due season and of the pleasure it will be to Him to find that kind of thing going on when He comes. Let us be concerned that the ministry is characterised thus!

And now to speak about Abigail. I believe she represents an element that characterises the body of the saints - the sympathetic subjective work of God in His people. That element is abundantly amongst us. It is sound; it is spiritual; it has right feelings; it has a right judgment of things. Thank God for it! It is the spiritual element amongst us. It is not always in the forefront, alas!

It may be unnoticed, but it is there. In the forefront at Carmel was a man who was shearing sheep. Is it possible that there may be with us, in some sense, a tendency to exploit the saints? Before I leave the matter of the ministry I would address a word to myself and to all who have part in Levitical service, as we call it. Are we wholly delivered from a tendency to exploit the saints? The beloved brethren, in our day, have hearts which flow out freely. I have been greatly touched, while in this country, to receive practical expressions of the love and fellowship of the saints. This is something which must be regarded and appreciated with spiritual feelings, lest, in any way, we be marked by covetousness. Paul reminds the brethren at Thessalonica that he had not been among them with flattering discourse nor with a pretext for covetousness. Elsewhere he says, We seek not yours but you. Oh, that we might be preserved from shearing sheep! The affections of the saints, expressed in monetary gifts to those who serve, must be held in the most sanctified way and what is received used rightly, because it represents the practical expression of divine love operating in the hearts of the saints. But here is a man whose greatness has been built up through the shearing of the sheep. Never is David spoken of as shearing sheep - Nabal's young men could say that David and his men were a wall to them night and day and that nothing was hurt and not a sheep was lost during the time they were near. Thus the shepherd care of David, even in this military position, found its expression, not only in himself, but in the young men that surrounded him, over whom he had become captain. That is what is needed - the shepherd spirit that guards and binds, and does not exploit.

But then, Nabal represents another dangerous element, as well. He says, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there are many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. And shall *I* take *my* bread and *my* water and *my* flesh which *I* have killed for *my* shearers, and give it to men whom *I* know not whence they are?" Let me say, beloved brethren, in holy boldness, that if you find persons who are spreading damaging reports among the brethren, it is not only to depreciate others but to exalt self. And there is too much of this going on. There is too much evil-speaking. I am not seeking to accuse, but I fear that what is spoken of in the world as a "whispering campaign" is liable to be carried on amongst us, and the enemy is behind it. Let us seek to counter this by adhering to the word of Paul, "Against an elder receive not an accusation unless where there are two or three witnesses,"

1 Timothy 5: 19. We are to have regard for what the Lord Jesus has invested in those whom He is using to serve His people. Let us not spread or *receive* an evil report against them. Such reports will not spread if we do not receive

them. And so Nabal asked, Who is David? Well, his young men could answer that. They told Abigail about David. The slander was met by a spiritual state amongst the brethren. And Abigail represents just that. It is the subjective state amongst the brethren that enters feelingly into the battles of Jehovah. She says, of the souls of the enemies of David, "Them shall he sling out from the hollow of the sling." That expression should stir the feelings of the most militant believer Abigail is the assembly militant! But she speaks of *the sling*. She does not say that David's enemies are to be impaled upon a spear, the shaft of which is like a weaver's beam. It is not a Philistine weapon! "For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God." She speaks of the sling that David used to overthrow Goliath, the spirit that marked him as he went down into the valley of Elah. It was not with Saul's armour; it was not with a shield; he went with a shepherd's bag and a sling and five smooth stones. It is the spirit in which Jesus met the mighty power of Satan. It is the spirit of going down. And Abigail goes down. It has often been referred to. While Abigail was "coming down by the covert of the hill, behold David and his men came down opposite to her." In that spirit they met and the matter was adjusted. But she had a right judgment of the enemies. They were to be dealt with; they were not to be overlooked, but the instruments of our warfare are not to be fleshly.

But then Abigail says, "And if a man is risen up to pursue thee and to seek thy life, the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God." What an expression - "*Bound*

*in the bundle of the living?*" It is like the sheaf that remains standing. "The bundle of the living" is going through. Abigail, I believe, represents the subjective work in the saints, which may not find much in the way of public expression, but which, in a crisis, gives support and impetus to what is right. She would prevent David from doing something rash, but at the same time would have a right judgment of conditions in a locality. She says of Nabal, "This man of Belial, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." There is no uncertainty about it; the root of the matter must be named. It is a great help to *name* things on the one hand and yet to restrain any abortive action which might bring distress and sorrow. I remember our beloved brother, Mr. Taylor, saying, in relation to a matter, We need to have patience because God is working. If God is working we can have patience, but if there is an insulation of self-will between God's desire to help and a readiness on our part to be helped, *we must name the condition*.

And then we see that Abigail went to David with a gift. In a place characterised by exploitation, the spiritual element rises up to control the

situation on the basis of good feelings, which can only exist and find vent when the evil has been named and dealt with. Thus the wealth that is amongst the saints is now brought into availability. The yoke of self-interest is thrown off and good feelings mark the saints. Again we have the administration of food to meet conditions, but here it is in the spontaneous outflow of affections from a spiritual element that rises up to offset the evil, using weapons which are not carnal but nevertheless mighty and effectual.

And so, beloved brethren, I believe that this great service of binding together can be effected through the skilful administration of the food supply, and by the operation of right spiritual feelings amongst us.

To this end may the Lord grant that these things may find a place in our hearts and that each one of us may have a part in binding, locally and universally, a sheaf that will remain standing.

May the Lord bless the word!