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EDUCATION IN VIEW OF THE TESTIMONY

2 Kings 2: 1 - 14; 2 Kings 6: 14 - 17

It will be clear, dear brethren, that the history of Elisha corresponds with the present time. That is, Elijah was taken up into heaven and Elisha was left here in testimony in his absence. And his history therefore represents the position of the saints here on earth, as in the charge and possession of the Holy Spirit, as in testimony to God. And therefore it has a distinct voice to us. And especially this passage we have read in chapter 2, because Elijah was passing Elisha through a period of instruction with a view to his learning how to fill the place of testimony here in a way that would be approved of God. And so the chapter opens with it saying that when Jehovah would take up Elijah into the heavens by a whirlwind Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elisha was already at Gilgal. That is an important starting point, for Gilgal as we know, represents the cutting off of the flesh. It is of no use our thinking of being here in testimony for God if we are not going to accept the cutting off of the flesh, which has taken place for God in the cross of Christ, and which we are intended to maintain in our souls by the power of the Holy Spirit. For as we were saying this afternoon, the Spirit of God is always faithful to Christ in heaven and to His cross. He is faithful to Christ in heaven in keeping before us the Man in whom God delights, and faithful to His cross, as that point where God has terminated judicially the history of the first man. This is not a matter, dear brethren, of mere doctrine. It is a matter of what has actually taken place. Let us not forget that, that the death of Christ on the cross has actually taken place. And that when He took His place on the cross for us,

and was made sin, God judged sin in the flesh - condemned it, in the Person of His Son. And when Christ died and was buried there was before God the actual termination in death vicariously of those who put their trust in Christ and their actual putting out of sight in His burial. The death and burial of Christ are part of the gospel which we have received, and it is important therefore that we should be ready to accept the moral import of the death and burial of Christ. We are not honest if we are not prepared to accept the moral import of the death and burial of Christ, for it is an essential part of the gospel which we have believed. And as I say, the Spirit of God is always faithful to Christ personally and to His death.

Now Elisha, so far, was at the right spot. He was at Gilgal. And Elijah, it says, went with Elisha from Gilgal. That is, Elijah would give Elisha to understand that he, Elijah, was prepared to be with Elisha. But then in the history that follows, the exercise which Elijah raised with Elisha, was whether Elisha was

prepared to be with Elijah. And that is an important matter. As it says in one of the chapters of 2 Chronicles, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him." That is there are certain conditions necessary if the Lord is to be with us. He wants to be with us, indeed He says, "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age." He is prepared to be with us, but in actual fact, He can only be with us, in the sense of real power and support, if we are with Him. And that is the question which the rest of the verses which I read in chapter 2 raise, whether Elisha is prepared to be with Elijah. Elijah tests him three times over by inviting him to remain where he was while Elijah went on elsewhere, and in each case Elisha says, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." That is, he was determined that he would be with Elijah wherever he went. Now that is a most important matter, dear brethren, if we would be with the Lord and with God in the testimony, that we must be prepared for movement, for the Lord is always in movement. The testimony is in movement. The Lord says, "Where I am, there also shall be my servant." And while I do not doubt that that refers, in one sense, to the future, the reward that the servant will have in being with Christ, I believe it has very definitely a present voice, that if any one would serve the Lord he must be concerned to be with the Lord where He is at the moment. And where the Lord is at the moment is to be discerned by the distinctive ministry which the Lord is giving. And so, Elijah says, "Jehovah has sent me to Bethel." And Elisha goes with him to Bethel. I understand the force of these movements of Elijah to one place after another, is that he would have Elisha learn Elijah's view, Elijah's judgment, of them. And hence it is for us to inquire what these places represent, and what the Lord has to say in regard of them - what His view of the matter is. Bethel, as we know, is the house of God. And we know, from the first epistle to Timothy, that it is "the assembly of the living God." You remember how Paul said to Timothy, "That thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God; the pillar and base of the truth." And hence, the first thing the Lord would raise with us, with a view to our being fitted to be here in the testimony, is whether we have a right view of the assembly. Have we got His view of it? Elisha had to go with Elijah to Bethel, and to see what Elijah thought about Bethel. And that is an important matter that the Lord would raise, as to whether we have a right view of the assembly, because every one of us who has received the Holy Spirit, belongs to it. Each one is an essential part of it. And the first thing that is said about it, and the first thing that Bethel brings to our minds, is that it is the house of God. God is dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit, as it says, "A habitation of God in the Spirit." And that, one might say, for the sake of any younger ones, is not merely what we are when we are convened, it is what we are always, whether we are together or not. We are always the house of God

in virtue of the fact that God is dwelling in us by the Spirit. God Himself has taken up His abode in us.

Well now, what kind of behaviour befits those who compose the house of God? We cannot get away from it even if we would. God has taken up His abode in us permanently. The Spirit is never going to leave us. What kind of behaviour then befits those in whom God is dwelling? That is something for us to have always in mind. And not only that but that the assembly, which is the house of God is the pillar and base of the truth. Now that is a very wholesome matter for us to face, because the truth is in this world in testimony and the assembly is the pillar and base of it. The idea of a pillar is something that stands out prominently in order to represent the matter in question. And the assembly is the pillar of the truth. Now it may be that some have not apprehended the importance of the truth. Let me just say this that from the moment that the serpent said to the woman in the garden of Eden, "Hath God said," and then he went further and said, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, ...ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," insinuating to her mind that God was untruthful, that He was not reliable and that He was holding back from man something that was for his advantage, from that moment the truth has been in conflict in this world. The truth has been called in question from that moment, and now God has set Himself out to bring the truth into display in this world. He desires that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, and that is the truth as to God, the answer to Satan's lie, and the assembly is the pillar of the truth and the base of it. Hence the importance of the assembly and the responsibility attaching to it that persons are to get their right thoughts as to God from the assembly. That is the vessel to which the truth of God is committed, the divine intention is that people should get right thoughts as to God from the assembly. Hence, as I say, dear brethren, this is a very important matter to face. You can understand Elijah putting the test to Elisha. I do not suppose for a moment that Elijah hoped that Elisha would stay where he was, he simply invited him to stay where he was in order to bring out the determination that was there in Elisha not to tarry where he was but to move on with Elijah. And the first place that Elijah saw that it was necessary that he should go to, was Bethel, in order that he should get a right view of the fact that the house of God is here. And so, as you remember, the apostle Paul, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, speaks to us individually in respect of the great fact that the Holy Spirit is here in each one of us. He says, "Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have of God? "And hence the great fact of the dwelling here in believers of the Holy Spirit is to have effect on the way in which we hold our bodies, where we

take them, and what we do with them, because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. How it dignifies the believer's body - the youngest believer, how valuable his body is, how dignified it is. That God Himself has taken up His abode in that frail, human, mortal vessel, the body of the believer. So that is the first thing, that Elisha was to go to Bethel. And then the next thing is, Elijah says to him, "Abide here, I pray thee, for Jehovah has sent me to Jericho." Now Elisha is to be at Jericho with Elijah, he is to have Elijah's view of Jericho. Jericho, as we know, is the world. It is the world as a great system which Satan has built up and which he would use to hinder the saints of God getting into the inheritance which God has in mind for them. Later on in this chapter we find that Jericho, as a city, was pleasantly situated. They say to Elisha, "The situation of the city is good." "But," they say, "the water is bad, and the land is barren," and that is exactly what the world is. It is in a favourable situation at the present moment, and has been ever since Christ went on high, because God is favourable to it. He is longsuffering, not desiring that any should perish. So it stands in a favourable position at the present time, but at the same time its water is bad and the land is barren. That is the resources of life, of life morally, that the world provides, are bad, they have no goodness in them, and there is no fruitfulness for God in the world, as such. Let not men deceive the saints by suggesting that there are features about the world that are good, and so on, we want to have God's estimate of it. The Lord said of the Holy Spirit that having come, He would bring demonstration to the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment. "Of sin," He says, "because they do not believe on me." Well that holds good today. The world, as such, does not believe on Christ, and the believer should hold that in his mind, and not be deceived by anything plausible that might suggest what was good in connection with the world. "They believe not on me" is equally true now as when the Lord spoke the word. And hence we need to be with the Lord in that and have His judgment and the Spirit's judgment about the world, in which we are, in God's ways, as a matter of testimony. And then, not only does it not believe on Christ, but it is exposed, by the presence of the Spirit, in regard of righteousness; it is exposed as unrighteous. The world had no place for *the* righteous One, and it has no place for Him. He says, "Of righteousness because I go away to my Father." That is the way the truth is presented in John's gospel. Not that the Lord was crucified and taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain, although the fact that He was crucified is recorded in John's gospel, but the point of view in John's gospel is that the Lord *departed from* the world and went to the Father. He departed from the world because there was no room for Him in the world. "They have both seen and hated," He says, "both me and my Father." "They hated me without a cause." There was no room for the righteous One in the world and therefore He left it and went

to His Father, and the world stands exposed in respect of righteousness by that very fact. And then He says, "Of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged." That is, the Lord has left the world as a judged thing, and He would have us understand that the prince of the world is judged.

Well now, all that, I believe, enters into this matter of going to Jericho. We want first of all to have God's view of the assembly and how great it is. How helpful to us to remember that we belong to the house of God - that we form it. And that the assembly is the pillar and base of the truth. How important that is. But then we are also to have the Lord's own view of the world, and to hold it in our minds, so that we are not in any way attracted or diverted by it.

And then, at each of these places, if you will notice, the sons of the prophets come to him and say, "Dost thou know that Jehovah will take away thy master from over thy head today?" And he said, "I also know it; be silent!" I believe that is intended to convey to us that Elisha felt the fact that Elijah was going to be taken away. It becomes a test to us as to whether we really feel the absence of Christ. Elisha says, "I also know it: be silent!" as though he had deep feeling about it. The sons of the prophets could tell him the truth, the actual fact, but he says, "I also know it: be silent!" As though to say, I do not need to be reminded about that, I am very much feeling it that Elijah is going to be taken from me this day. And so it raises the question as to whether we are really feeling in regard of the absence of Christ from this scene. But now it goes on to say that Elijah said, "Abide here, I pray thee, for Jehovah has sent me to the Jordan." And it says, "They two stood by the Jordan, and Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the waters and they were divided hither and thither; and they two went over on dry ground." I believe that is intended to convey to us, that in our minds and in our hearts' affections we are to contemplate the movements of Christ into death and out of it. For Jordan, of course, represents the death of Christ. We know how triumphantly the ark moved into the Jordan when God was going to bring His people into their inheritance. We remember how they were told to keep a distance of two thousand cubits between the ark and themselves, in order that they might have their attention fixed on the ark, that they might get an impression of the power and dignity of the ark as it moved forward into the Jordan. As the feet of the priests that bore the ark touched the brim of the water the Jordan went back and there was dry ground made over Jordan. Jordan, we are told, overflowed all its banks at harvest time. It has, I understand, a succession of banks in terraces, and all these banks were overflowed at harvest time, and it was at that time that the ark went into Jordan. So it is to emphasise to us the completeness of the victory of Christ over death when He went into death. The ark went into the midst of Jordan and there it remained, until all the

people had passed over. And the ark in the midst of Jordan, with no waters visible at all, bore witness to the complete victory of the ark over Jordan. For the antitype to it we have not only to take account of Christ going into death, but of His rising triumphantly from the dead, because it is there, in resurrection from the dead, that the completeness of His victory over death is seen. And how much entered into the death of Christ. The judgment of God was there. The power of Satan was there. The penalty upon man was there. All was there. All was entered into when the Lord went into death, and how complete has been His triumph! And He went into death in order that He might open up a way through death for the saints to be brought into that which is in God's purpose for them. I wonder whether we realise that our life is really bound up with Christ? Or do we simply view it that when we can no longer live here then there is something provided for us in heaven. Which is it to be, dear brethren, that we hold on to life here as long as we can with the comfortable assurance that when we can no longer remain here there is a place for us in heaven, or do we really believe, that according to the purpose of God, our life is bound up with Christ above. The things above are our portion, because that is what is to come into view as we see Christ going into death and rising again. It is a question of Christ as the power of God to open up a way for His people to move into that which His love from the very outset has had for them. And so that would very effectively detach us from this scene, save as recognising our responsibility to be in it in faithfulness in testimony. But as regards our vital interests, they are in another scene. As it says in the epistle to Philippians, Our commonwealth is in heaven, that is where it is. It is not that it is going to be there, but it is there, and it is there because Christ is there, and because the assembly belongs to Christ, as given to Him from the very beginning. It is a great thing to get into our minds that we belong to heaven, and we belong there because we belong to Christ, and that He is there, and that He has deliberately and in majesty gone into death and risen triumphantly out of it in order to make a way through for the people of God to pass over into the inheritance that divine love has given them. And the Holy Spirit is the Earnest of our inheritance. So that while we are still here for a moment in the ways of God, and in order to serve Him and to be here in testimony, we have the power in the Holy Spirit to enter into the things that are ours. The only thing, really, that we have not got, or that we have not the Earnest of, is the glorified condition. I quite admit that our measure is small, though there is no reason why it should not be greater, and I suppose, at the very best, we only enter into spiritual things in part at the present time, as Scripture says, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known," at the same time we have the Spirit as the Earnest of our inheritance. He links us up in our affections with Christ where He is, and He becomes the

means by which we may enter livingly into things that belong to heaven. Well now, all that is in view in our going, so to speak, with Elijah to Jordan. And it says, "Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither; and they two went over on dry ground." It is a question of the inherent power that there was in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not possible that He should beholden of death. It was not possible that He should be overcome by all that He entered into. That is the glory of Christ. Who else but the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, a divine Person, could exhaust the judgment of God? Who else could go into death in absolute holiness and rise out of it? It was not possible that He should be holden of it. And Elijah wrapping his mantle together, I believe, is to convey to us the concentrated power that was there in the Person of Christ on account of who and what He was intrinsically, for it was not possible that He should be holden of death. And so with the mantle wrapped together, Elijah smote the waters and they divided hither and thither, and they two went over on dry ground.

Well now, so much for the education of Elisha, and so much, dear brethren, for our education too, as we take these things up in the spiritual import of them. But now Elijah says to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken away from thee," and Elisha said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." A double portion. I suppose that may imply that we are to be impressed with the greatness of Christianity. And when I speak of Christianity I mean what is here in this day of the Spirit. The Lord Himself said, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father," suggesting that the apostles as having the Spirit would do even greater things than He had done. This is a remarkable thing, showing how great the day of the Spirit is. Even the shadow of Peter, falling upon persons, apparently healed them, and napkins taken from the body of Paul and put upon sick persons healed them. Such is this day of the Spirit. But I believe also that Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit conveys that he had a very real sense of his own smallness of measure. I think it would convey that Elisha in his own mind was comparing himself with Elijah, and saying, Well, if I've got to be here in your absence, in the place that you have filled, I shall need a double portion of your spirit. I believe it was a sense that Elisha had of his own smallness, his own inequality for the position. And that surely is a fitting feeling with us, for if we think of the things "which *Jesus* began both to do and to teach," and the thought of being here as a continuation of Jesus, we should certainly feel, and rightly feel, that we could not possibly fill out that position save in the fulness of the power of the Spirit. And so Elisha says, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." And Elijah says, "Thou hast asked a hard

thing." That is to say, it is not going to be arrived at without exercise, nevertheless he says, "If thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so to thee, but if not, it shall not be so." What does that mean for us? It means, surely, dear brethren, the need of constant watchfulness, the need of constant dependence. You can understand that Elisha would be saying, I dare not take my eye off Elijah now. If I take my eye off Elijah now he may be taken from me that moment, and then I shall not have the double portion of his spirit. You can understand what care, what vigilance, it would create, how much Elisha would feel the need of it, his need of watchfulness. And that is the thing that we all need, dear brethren, at this present time. Perhaps never more so than now because God is working mightily among the saints, and Satan is active also. Be assured of that, wherever God is working Satan is not far off, and he is very near to us all, and therefore constant vigilance and constant distrust of ourselves are needed if we are to be here, until the Lord comes, according to His mind. And so it says, "It came to pass as they went on, and talked, that behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire; and they parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! and he saw him no more." The chariot of *Israel*, and the horsemen thereof. Not the chariot of Elijah but the chariot of Israel. What does he mean by that? I believe he had an impression of the resources of divine power that were available now for God's people. It was the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. As though as he saw Elijah taken up into heaven, he got a sense that there were great resources of divine power available to God's people here. And that is exactly what the resurrection of Christ is intended to convey to us, for we are told in the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, that we are to get an impression of the surpassingness of God's power which He wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and that power is operating towards us. We are to understand that there is divine power, according to all that is needed, available to us, so that we might fill out the position that God intends us to occupy in His testimony here. And now, what is the effect of that upon Elisha? It says, "He saw him no more," just as we had this afternoon, the angel says to the eleven, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven." If a cloud had received Him out of their sight so that He was no longer visible, there was no object in gazing up into heaven. They were to accept it that a period of faith had begun, and they were to move in faith, as Paul says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." And so it says of Elisha, "He saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own garments and rent them in two pieces." He had gotten the impression that now the testimony is to be filled out in the life and grace of another Man, the Man whom heaven has received, and therefore he took hold of his own garments and rent them

in two pieces. That is it was definite and final. He does not just tear off a little bit, he rends his garments in two pieces. He deals with the matter drastically and completely. He is now entirely discarding that which had marked him naturally, with a view to taking his place in the testimony in the power and grace of the Man who is in heaven. And so he takes up Elijah's mantle which fell from him and moves forward in the power of that. It says, "He took the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from him, and smote the waters, and said, where is Jehovah the God of Elijah? he also smote the waters and they parted hither and thither and Elisha went over." That is, he uses the power. The mantle is thus a picture of the Spirit of God, that which has come down from the Man in heaven and which indicates the measure of the Man in heaven. It does not say that Elisha wore Elijah's mantle, but he took it up and used it. The mantle of Elijah would indicate the measure of the man. Just as Paul told Timothy to bring Paul's cloak which he had left at Troas with Carpus. He was to bring it with him. That would be a constant reminder to Timothy what a man Paul had been. What a measure his was, and Timothy was to have that with him as a reminder of the measure of Christianity set out in a man like Paul. Not that Paul was perfect, of course. Christ is always our standard, but at the same time, Paul is taken up by the Spirit of God also to be a standard, to show how much a man, one like ourselves, can be brought into correspondence with Christ. So that he says, "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ." We are not only to have Christ before our hearts as a standard, but we are also to have Paul before us as a model.

And so Elisha takes up his mantle. When Elisha was first taken up by Elijah, Elijah cast his mantle upon him. That is, Elisha started his history as identified with the testimony with an impression of Elijah's mantle. Elijah gave him that impression from the very start. You remember that Elijah was told to go and anoint Elisha prophet in his stead, and he went and found Elisha ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen and himself with the twelfth, and it does not say that he anointed him, but it says that he cast his mantle upon him. He cast *his mantle* upon him, as though from the very start he would give Elisha an impression of the mantle, and the mantle is the measure of the man. And therefore we are to have that before us constantly, the measure of the Man, the Man whom heaven has received. The "things which Jesus began both to do and to teach," are to be the measure, the standard of Christianity. And the power that comes down from the Man in heaven in the Holy Spirit is the only power by which these things can be realised.

Well now, in closing, I wanted to refer briefly to the sixth chapter because that brings in another feature in connection with the testimony which the Lord is stressing at the present time. The great characteristic feature of Christianity is,

of course, the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is *the* dominating feature of Christianity. The Holy Spirit does not simply come upon men from time to time as He did in Old Testament times, but He is here abidingly. As the Lord said, "God gives not the Spirit by measure." Christianity is characterised by the unmeasured giving of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit having come in personally to abide in each believer and to abide in the assembly, constituting it an habitation of God. But then there is also another provision for the testimony and that is that the angels of God, which, we are told, are innumerable, are all sent forth, without exception; the scripture says so, and therefore we are to believe it. Michael is active and Gabriel is active, and the innumerable company of angels, "sent forth," it says, "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." What a dignity it places upon us, dear brethren, that we are so provided for. What is it for? To make things easier for us. It is not. It is because we are the vessel of testimony. It is because the assembly is the pillar and base of the Truth. And God intends that whatever man, energised by Satan, may do in opposition to it, He intends that it should go through. And the Spirit is the power for it spiritually. The Spirit is irresistible; but then also the angels are there available to clear the way if need be. The Acts of the apostles abundantly illustrates that for us. We get, for instance, in chapter 5, the religious leaders in their hostility shut up Peter and John in prison. But then a prison door presents no difficulty to an angel. And so we read that an angel was sent and brought them out of the prison and told them to go and stand and speak in the temple all the words of *this* life. And they did. The words of *this* life - what life? The life that could be seen among the saints. The kind of life that Jerusalem had never seen before. A company of saints completely delivered from the principles of the world and its ways, moving together in love and contented; having all things common and testifying to Jesus. What a life it was! It was there in Jerusalem. It was indisputable. In order to stop the testimony the enemy put the apostles in prison, and one angel is sufficient to open the prison doors. There are other instances in the Acts, of course, of angelic intervention, but that is just to show us that if it is necessary to alter men's arrangements, the Lord will use angels to do it. They are there at our disposal. And so here Elisha is at Dothan and the king of Syria is disturbed because all his plans for fighting against Israel became known to the king of Israel. And he was troubled as to what it meant, he thought there was a traitor somewhere in his camp. And one of his servants said, "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber."

That is that Elisha as the vessel of testimony, typical of the saints as in the good of the Holy Spirit, can know what is going on, they can know the

movements of the enemy. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. He knows all that is going on. There is not a single movement of the enemy, not a single thought even that men may conceive, that God does not know about. And therefore if we were more ready to be available to the Spirit, we can be assured of this, that anything that Satan intends to bring in to oppress or hinder the saints, the Spirit of God can make known to us. And so finding himself outwitted as regards intelligence, the king of Syria thinks that he will use force, and so he sends an army, thinking, of course, that one man and his attendant will be no match for an army. The young man, his attendant, is disturbed, but Elisha is not disturbed. He says, "They that are with us are more than they that are with them." I suppose in the first place we may say that that is the Spirit Himself. It says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." So far as all that is spiritual is concerned, and knowledge and understanding and so on we are infinitely better off than the best brains in the world, because we have the Spirit of God. But there is also this great fact that there is an innumerable company of angels. There is no army in the world that is innumerable. They may run to large numbers, but there is no army in the world that is innumerable. And the saints have an innumerable company of angels to support them if need be, but not necessarily to preserve them from suffering. It is not intended that the testimony is to go through without suffering, because it is in suffering that fidelity is proved, and it is in suffering, in suffering for the truth, that one feature of conformity to Christ is brought about. So we must not expect that God will intervene angelically to prevent the saints from suffering. But He *will* intervene angelically whenever it is necessary in order to ensure that the testimony goes through. And so we are to be encouraged to commit ourselves to it. Whatever it involves we are to go on with it. And so Elisha says, "Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Elisha was the vessel of testimony here. Elisha is in that sense not a type of the Spirit of God personally so much. I do not say that he may not be in certain instances, but he is not so much that, because the Spirit of God personally does not need to be protected by angels. But he is a type of the saints here in the power of the Spirit of God, possessed by the Spirit of God and here in testimony to the truth, and in that position they are surrounded by an innumerable company of angels, or rather, the innumerable company of angels are all sent forth to minister to them as occasion requires. And we are to have our eyes open to this, to this unseen world, all that there is in the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and all that there is in the presence of angels on the other, in view of the support of the truth, for the assembly is the pillar and base of the truth. There is nothing more important than the truth. It was the

truth as to God that was challenged at the very outset by Satan, and it is the truth as to God that is to go through untarnished, and it is to go through by means of us. That is what we have got to take to heart. The truth is to go through by us, and with a view to its going through, God Himself in the Spirit has taken up His abode in us.

So may the Lord encourage us, dear brethren, to commit ourselves fully to these things, and to understand that only as the Holy Spirit is recognised can we fill out the place here that God intends us to occupy.

WHAT IS PROPER TO BRETHREN

Genesis 4:1,2; Genesis 4:8-11; Genesis 14:13-20; 1 John 3:10-17

I wish to speak, dear brethren, of the brother and what is proper to us as brethren. And when I speak of the brother, I include of course, sisters. That is, I am thinking of the saints as spoken of as the brethren. We love the brethren, it says. And I am speaking of the brother as an individual member, whether a brother or a sister of that company which Scripture speaks of as the brethren. The term, I think, is intended to convey what we are in our affinity with one another as born of God. That is we are of the same family, as being born of God, and therefore have the affections and feelings proper to that family. And God has set us in relation to one another as brethren, I think for a two-fold purpose. First of all, as here in this world and the children of God, we are here in testimony to what God is in His nature and attributes. That is, God is to be known in His children. The children of God are the brethren. He is to be known in the world in His children. That is one thought connected with children, that they normally convey some feature of resemblance to their parents; and the children of God are in the world as those who are born of God, in order that they might express in their life and conduct what God is in His nature and attributes, especially love, which is His nature, and righteousness, that is, the pursuit of what is right, morally right. Those two things are the two outstanding things which the epistle of John speaks of. Now as seen in that position of testimony, we are likely to incur opposition and hatred in the world, and therefore the second object in mind in being set here as brethren, is that, as in a scene of hostility in testimony, we should be of mutual support to one another. That is that we are not intended to be in it in a merely isolated, individual way, but as moving together with the affections and mutual care proper to the family to which we belong. And therefore the circle of the brethren is provided as a means of support to those who are in the world in the testimony. We have already alluded to it in our readings on the Acts, that when Peter and John were threatened by those who were opposed, it says, "being let go they went to their own company" - their *own* company. There was no other such company in Jerusalem. It was the company of the brethren, and Peter and John being let go went, it says, to their own company, and the whole company took up the matter in prayer with God. Well now I said that what we are as brethren from this point of view, stands related to what we are in relation to one another as born of God, as being of the same family. There is, of course, a higher view of the saints as brethren of Christ. It says that, "Both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." That is, the saints are regarded as of

the same order as Christ, and I believe that consists in the fact that, not only are we born of God, but that we have received the Spirit of the ascended Man. The Holy Spirit whom we have received is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and I believe it is that which constitutes us heavenly and of the order of Christ. You remember that in John 20 it is said of the Lord that He breathed *into* the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." That is He set them up in the possession of His own spirit, and so, being all of one He is not ashamed to call us brethren. And so we read in Romans 8 that, "whom he has foreknown he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren." That is it is sonship that is in God's mind; it is that to which He has predestinated us, the pattern of it being seen in Christ Himself, and the full thought of sonship is realised when we are conformed to His image in every way, and there God will have Christ before Him pre-eminent among many of His brethren, many of those of His own order.

But I wish to speak now of what we are as brethren of one another - as those who are born of God. And that involves that we are to love one another, and that involves too that we are to care for one another's souls. It is interesting that at the outset, as we read in Genesis 4, God makes so much of Abel being *a brother*. Adam and Eve had been recovered, you might say, to God. God had brought home to them their guilt, and then He had clothed them with coats of skin, so that, typically at any rate, and I have no doubt in some measure of consciousness of acceptance, they were now set up as being instructed in righteousness, having a judgment of sin, but there as in the value of redeeming love. I am not speaking of how far they were intelligent, but that is what we can see in it. That they had been convicted of sin, and that God had provided them with a righteousness, based on the death of a substitute, so that they were really set up now as a witness to righteousness and a witness to redeeming love. But now Cain is born and Eve thinks she has acquired a man from the Lord; she thinks that the seed of the woman has already arrived in this son Cain who was born, and she names him Cain, meaning "Acquisition" and saying, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah," but she turned out to be mistaken; her son turned out to be the beginning of the line of "the wicked one" - that is what John's epistle tells us, that "Cain was of the wicked one." So that God having recovered Adam and Eve and set them up in this world as a testimony to righteousness and love, the devil now contests the matter. He brings on the scene a man who was going to prove himself to be characteristically of the wicked one. But then it says of Eve, "She further bore his brother Abel." The second one that was born was a brother. God saw to it that a brother was brought on the scene, and moreover it says, "And Abel

was a shepherd." The first brother was a shepherd, and that is an important matter, showing that one idea connected with a brother is that he is to care for the souls of the saints. He is first of all to learn to care for his own soul. We read in the first epistle of John that, "He that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him," therefore we have to learn first of all to care for our own souls, and that I believe is illustrated in David's history as a young man. You remember how he tells Saul, when he was proposing to go to meet the giant, that he was keeping his father's flock and a lion and a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, and he says he went after them and smote them and he rescued the lamb from the lion and the bear. Why he did it was because he accepted responsibility for every lamb in the flock, which belonged to his father, and he put his trust in God. I believe the lamb is really a picture of one's own soul, that we have, in early history to learn how to preserve our own souls, because Satan will try to ensnare us. He will try to capture us. He will try to rob God of the portion that He has a right to in each of the souls of His own; and therefore he will come against us in one form or another. It might be the terrifying form of a lion, the intimidating idea, or it might be the more seductive form of the bear; but whatever the form of his attack, we have got to learn to meet him. The way we meet the devil, dear brethren, is by just maintaining what is right. Overcoming in spiritual things is not a matter of something heroic, it is a matter simply of not surrendering or compromising what is right. And God's support and the support of the Spirit are proved as we are on that line. You remember how the Lord met the devil in the wilderness. He did not meet him with divine power, but he simply met him in a way that is proper to a man, He says, "It is written," and He would not allow for a moment any departure from what was written, and He met Satan on those lines, that He maintained what was right in a man in his relations with God, and Satan was thus completely defeated. And therefore, as I was saying, we need to learn first of all, to keep our own souls, and David proved faithful in that respect in regard of the lamb, he recovered it, and hence it says in the Psalm that God took him from the sheepfolds to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance. That is, having proved faithful in that which is least, he became advanced to have charge of that which was great. So as I was saying, the first brother was a shepherd. And so in these verses we have read, from verse 8 onward, six times Abel is spoken of as Cain's brother. The thought of the brother is emphasised, and Jehovah tells Cain that Abel's desire would be toward him; I think that means that Abel loved Cain. There was that element there in Abel. These features of righteousness and love were there in Abel. He was maintaining the truth for the moment: that is, he approached God with a sacrifice which was in keeping with the way God had clothed his parents with coats of skin, and he was

loving his brother. He was maintaining righteousness and expressing love, and that is why he became the object of the hatred of this one who was of the wicked one, and he slew his brother. Cain says to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That is exactly what we are, dear brethren, we are our brother's keeper, and that is what we shall come to in the first epistle of John, that the brother is intended to have his eyes open that he may see his brother having need, and he is not to ignore it, for according to chapter 5 of the epistle, he may see his brother sin, and if he sees his brother sin, a sin not unto death, he is to ask for him. He is not to ignore it, he is not to say to himself that it is not *his* affair, he is to get to God about it, because we are our brother's keeper. Each one of us is responsible for the souls of those that are near to us, and this particularly applies in any locality. We cannot, of course, in any practical way, be the keeper of the souls of all the brethren, but we can accept responsibility for those amongst whom God has immediately placed us, and therefore in any locality there should be developed among the brethren the care of one another. First of all, pray for one another. Keep our eyes open and see what the need is. Pray for those who are getting on, that they may get on still better, and pray for those who are not getting on, that the Lord may exercise them and help them. But then, if we are to be an influence for good among our brethren, and if we are to have power with God, in our prayers, we must see to it that we are going on ourselves. That is of the greatest importance. And of course, it is a very serious matter for anyone to stumble a little one. That is another matter which the older brothers and sisters, especially, have to beware of, the great seriousness of becoming a stumbling block to one of the little ones. And so as I was saying, the brother is a shepherd, and he is responsible for his brother's soul. "Am I my brother's keeper," Cain says, but God does not answer his question, but the Scriptures show that the thought is that we are to accept responsibility in regard of our brethren.

Now when we come to the next passage, that is seen in Abraham, and Abraham is spoken of in scripture as the father of us all. And that means that we are to look to Abraham as an example. Normally, children in a family, look to their father. They like to do the same things that they see their father do, I mean that is normal. And that is the idea, among other things, in connection with Abraham being father of us all: that he sets out the features of those who are truly of faith. He was the beginning, you might say, of the household of faith. Not that there were not those marked by faith before him, because there were. Abel and Enoch and Noah and so on, only it was in Abraham the great principle of living by faith was set out, and so he is said to be the father of us all. So now we read in this 14th chapter, that Abram the Hebrew, was dwelling

by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, the *brother* of Eschol, and the *brother* of Aner. That is, Abram was dwelling by the oaks of Mamre in the region at any rate, in the company, it would seem, of these three men who are called brothers. It says they were Abram's allies. Now that is an important matter. First of all that we should dwell by the oaks of Mamre, for Mamre is Hebron, and Hebron in Scripture always refers to the purpose of God. We are told that it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt, the town which was, I understand, a seat of learning in Egypt. Seven years before that was built, Hebron was built. So that whatever wisdom there may be attaching to this world, God has in His thoughts for the saints an order of wisdom, infinitely superior to it and that precedes it. God's thoughts for the saints go back before the foundation of the world, and therefore in Corinthians we are told about that "hidden wisdom" which God prepared before the world for our glory. And Abram was dwelling in the light of that. He was dwelling by the oaks of Mamre. The oaks speak of *great stability*. And it is a great thing to have the purpose of God in our minds and hearts, for it gives great stability. Whatever happens in *this* world, the purpose of God is going through, and if we are the subjects of that purpose, we are going through too. And if we are the subjects of the purpose of God it means that we are the objects of the love of God - that is another thing. And so our portion is absolutely immovable, it is absolutely stable and we ourselves are the objects of the love of God. There is nothing like the sense of that to give stability in the soul. And Abram was dwelling there, he was not just visiting the place, but he dwelt there. And he dwelt there with three brothers, that is to say, there is a suggestion of not only having the purpose of God in our souls, but also that we appreciate the circle of the brethren. They were his allies. There was no divergence between them but they were co-operating with him. But now news is brought to him about another brother, Lot. It says, "And one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew... and Abram heard that his brother was taken captive." That is a brother who has been caught by the world. There is no reason to suppose that Lot had any part in the wickedness of Sodom. Indeed we know from Peter's epistle, in which he is called the righteous man, that he tormented his righteous soul day after day on account of the wickedness of Sodom. So that Lot, personally, was a righteous man, but yet he was occupying a place in Sodom. He chose it too, deliberately, and he acquired a certain position of prominence, apparently that of a magistrate. He acquired a position in Sodom, and the result was that when king Chedorlaomer and those with him came and defeated the king of Sodom, and his allies, Lot was carried away captive. Well now, Abram does not say, "It is his own fault, I am afraid it is just the end of a course; he looked toward Sodom and fancied it and this is the result ": he did not leave it at that. He set

out to recover his brother if possible. And what is to be noted is that he had three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his house. That is, there is a suggestion of a kind of system with which Abram is connected, entirely outside the world system by which Lot had been captivated. And that, I think we can say humbly, we know something of. There is, thank God, a system, the Christian circle, the Christian fellowship and all that belongs to it there is that system in which we find our life and move freely, and Abram had three hundred and eighteen trained servants, born in his house. That is, he had those who belonged to the system; they had not taken on the features of Sodom, but they belonged to this system to which Abram belonged. They were trained in it. That is a very important matter, that those who are born, born in Zion, as you might say, those who are given to us as a result of the work of God, should be trained in what belongs to the truth. They must be instructed in divine principles, and Abram had a large number of them, three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his house, who were available to him for this work of saving his brother. I suppose there is nothing so calculated to impress Christians who get carried away by the world, but find out how empty and hollow it is, as to bring before them by some means that there *is* a system in which life and satisfaction and contentment are to be found. Abram, at any rate, used what was available under his hand, and went forth and was successful in saving his brother Lot. Alas! we know that Lot did not benefit by it. We know that eventually he goes back to Sodom and has to be dragged out of it in God's mercy by the angels when Sodom was overthrown; but at any rate Abram had proved himself a true brother. Whatever the result was, or lack of result, Abram had proved himself to be a true brother. And then as he returns from the slaughter of the kings it says that "Melchisedec, king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of the Most High God." It is as though in all these exercises the Lord would always bring before us the thought of the service of God. Abram might have felt jubilant at the success of his efforts, in the way that he had recovered all the persons and all the property: he might have been inclined to be jubilant but Melchisedec comes out with bread and wine, "And he was priest of the Most High God," and he blesses Abram on the part of the Most High God. So it is a question of the Lord being before us, that the greatest thing of all is that we know God, and that we have part in the service of God. And if saints are to be delivered, the point is that they are to have part in the service of God too. We must be delivered from the world to be available to serve God acceptably, and at this point Melchisedec comes out - type of Christ - and he brings out bread and wine; I suppose to bring home to Abram that there was sustenance for him which the world could not afford: spiritual food, spiritual stimulation, all in view of his being maintained in liberty and power to

serve God. And he blesses Abram. He blesses God, too, but he first blesses Abram. "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth." It is a far greater thing to be blessed by God, especially God known as the possessor of heavens and earth, as it says in Ephesians, "I bow my knees to the Father... of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." What a vast extent of glory and blessing God has before Him. And we are blessed by Him, blessed in a most exalted way. And so all that is brought to bear on Abram, typically upon ourselves, in order to deliver us completely, and preserve us completely, from any taint of this world, from any allowance of the principles of the world, in self-exaltation or self-complacency or whatever it might be, and to remind us that our great business and responsibility, whatever else is done, and we are responsible to care for our brethren, is to be engaged with the service of God, and to be engaged in it not formally, but in spiritual power and liberty. If we are maintained in exercise we soon discover anything that hinders our spiritual liberty and power, and it helps us if we keep before us the thought that God has taken us up to serve Him. Melchisedec was priest of the Most High God, and he sets before Abram the thought of the service of the Most High God because he was priest. But he came out to serve Abram, in order that he might convey to Abram that he was blessed of God. And of course if God blesses us His intention is that we should bless God, that we should be secured for His service. And so Abram gave him, it says, the tenth part of all.

But now I pass on to John's epistle, and that really gives us in teaching what we have been referring to in type in the passages in Genesis. It says, "In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. Whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, and he who does not love his brother." These are the two things which God is looking for pre-eminently in His children as here in testimony. That we should *practise* righteousness, that is, what is right in the sight of God is to govern us in *all* that we do. Follow righteousness, Paul says to Timothy. That is the first principle. I know he brings that in particularly in relation to religious associations, but at the same time it is the principle that is to govern us in all things, in the smallest thing as well as the biggest thing. Follow righteousness. And righteousness is simply what is right in the sight of God. Not what is right in the sight of men but what is right in the sight of God is to be followed, and it is to be followed because we are here as children of God, and if we fail in righteousness practically we deny the character of God. And that is a very solemn matter. We are here as born of God to be a testimony in the world to what God is in His attributes and in His nature. And God is righteous, He is essentially righteous, and therefore what is right in the sight of God is to characterise His children. And then love

is also to characterise us because God *is* love, and that is where the brother comes in. If I am living in an isolated spot and have no brethren I have very little opportunity to express love and very little opportunity to develop in love. The circle of the brethren is given us as the circle in which love is to be expressed and developed! The reason for that is that love is of God, and God has in mind that there should be a circle maintained here on earth, in the very presence of all that is of the wicked one, in which what is of Himself is expressed. We may rest assured that Satan will attack. He always will, wherever there is what is of God Satan is not far off. I know no more solemn instance of that than we have in John 13 where we have the Lord with His disciples at supper time, and the devil had put into the heart of Judas Iscariote, one of the disciples of Jesus, to betray Him. And then when Jesus gave to Judas the sop while he was still at table, it says, "then entered Satan into him." Think of that! How near Satan is, that there were Jesus and His disciples, a circle of love, and Satan was nearby. There was what was of God there and Satan was nearby try to get in, and there was one of the company who afforded him a loop-hole and Satan got in. And that is something that we are always to bear in mind, dear brethren, that as long as we are here and we are going on with what is of God, Satan is not far off. And therefore we must be watchful not to allow any loop-holes. If I begin to allow the principle of covetousness, if I begin to allow the principle of pride, if I begin to allow any false principle, then I am affording a loop-hole for Satan. And that is one reason, dear brethren, why the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is such a *very* great matter. It is such a preservative, such a privilege, that we should have God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us. He has holy sensibilities, I need not say, and if we do not quench Him, if we do not grieve Him, He will promote similar sensibilities with us. And if we are quick to His touch, and if we are sensitive as He gives us the consciousness that we have grieved Him, then there is immediate recovery open to us, so that we do not become a tool for the enemy. And so it says, "This is the message which ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." And then it goes on to say, "Do not wonder, brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." It is a good thing, dear brethren, to cultivate this. And love, I would say, expresses itself in activity, and in sacrifice. Love does not demand. Love on *my* part does not demand that the saints should love *me*; love in *my* heart expresses itself in serving the saints and seeking their good. Love never demands, love never makes itself an object. If we want to see a description of love in the abstract we should read the 13th chapter of the 1st epistle to Corinthians, "Love... does not seek what is its own," it says, "Love... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things," and so on. And in that same chapter we are told that one might have

prophecy and knowledge and faith, and yet if I have not love I am nothing. Our power in service is not our measure. Our real measure is love and how much we *do* love. But here 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. He who does not love his brother abides in death." And now it says, "Hereby we have known love." It is a question, not now of brotherly love, although love is to find expression in the circle of the brethren, and development there, but now it is love in its absoluteness, what God is in His nature. We are taught in Peter's epistle that in brotherly love we are to have love. So it says, "Hereby we have known love, because He has laid down his life for us." That is always to be before our minds and hearts, that love has come into expression. God is love, and what God is has come into perfect expression in Jesus. He has laid down His life for us, and we ought, it says - it is now a question of moral obligation - "we ought, for the brethren, to lay down *our* lives." That shows that the circle of the brethren is constituted for the express purpose of the expression and development of love, because God is love. And one of the ways in which love expresses itself is that we accept the responsibility to care for our brethren, and especially to care for their souls. Remember what it says in the epistle to the Ephesians, "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." Love is of God, and we are to be imitators of God, but if we are to learn love in its expression, we learn it in Christ, as it is said, "the Christ loved us and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." I believe the expression of love was so perfect in Christ when He gave Himself for us, that it went up to God as a sweet-smelling savour. Love in activity as of God was seen in Christ in such perfection in self-sacrifice, that it went up to God as a sweet-smelling savour. And now we are to take on the same features, we are to *walk* in love as imitators of God, as beloved children.

And so, as I was saying a moment ago, in order that these things should not be theoretical with us, the epistle contemplates that we should keep our eyes open, so it says, "Whoso may have the world's substance, and see his brother having need, and shut up his bowels from him, how abides the love of God in him?" And then chapter 5 says, "If anyone *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." That is in material things and in spiritual things we are to have our eyes open to see how the brethren are getting on, and if anyone sees his brother, or of course, his sister, sinning a sin, not unto death, the first thing he should do is to ask for him - to ask God. He should get to God about him, and

plead on his behalf that he may be allowed to continue, that he may be restored in his soul and continue in life. And then, dear brethren, if we get to God about someone else who has sinned, we shall very likely find that God will raise exercises with ourselves, and all that will be for our help, and as we face those exercises with God, we may acquire a little power and influence, and be able to save our brother. Indeed in Galatians, as has been much brought before our notice in recent years, it says, "If even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The Lord places on the spiritual the responsibility of restoring one taken in a fault. Here John says you are to ask for him, and use your influence with God that such an one might be recovered. But Galatians would go further, and say *you* are to restore such an one. As has been said by another, if we pray for people we gain power with them. If we get to God about them in secret we may acquire a certain amount of moral power with them, so as to be able, like Abram, to recover our brother.

I think from what I have said, dear brethren, that the importance of the brother, that is, the brotherly element, seen in sisters as well as in actual brothers, will be manifest. And you will remember too that Paul constantly brings in a brother. In writing to the Corinthians in his first epistle he says, "Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, and Sosthenes the brother." As an apostle he is authoritative, he brings in the mind of the Lord, and it is the Lord's commandment and it must be obeyed, but then he brings in the brother with him. The brother would not assert authority, but he would move about as caring for the souls of the brethren. So Paul always looks for the support of the ministry by the influence and power of the brother. And so in writing his second epistle to Corinthians he says again, "Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, and the brother Timotheus." He brings in another brother. And then in writing to the Corinthians too, in the first epistle he says, "Aquila and Priscilla... salute you much." "Salute you *much* in the Lord," why does he say that? Because Aquila and Priscilla had been local brethren at Corinth at one time, and the Corinthians would know them well, and know indeed, the kind of line that they were on, and when they heard that Aquila and Priscilla, who were with Paul when he wrote his first epistle, saluted them *much* in the Lord, they would say to themselves, what is the force of that word "much"? And they would perhaps realise that Aquila and Priscilla were very much concerned about them, and the assembly in their house also. And as they began to think on those lines, they would begin to understand why they were concerned about them. It would just be a means of bringing home to them that not only was their condition serious in the sight of the Lord and

of His servant the apostle, but this brother and sister, and the assembly in their house,

were feeling it too. They were a known brother and sister, who had been local at Corinth, and now they would bring their influence to bear upon the Corinthians, and say, We are thinking much about you, as though to emphasise tenderly without saying it, We hope you will soon get right!

I need not say more, dear brethren. All through the epistles we shall find the influence and importance of a brother. God has set us together as brethren, and we are brethren because we are born of God. We are born of God and children of God and that is what constitutes us brethren of one another, and our first responsibility, if I may say so, as children of God in the world is to express God in His nature and moral attributes. But then we are also a support to one another. The circle of the brethren is a great support to us as in a world in which we are in testimony, and in this circle we are to accept responsibility as brethren to care for one another's souls. And so the first brother was a shepherd.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Hebrews 2:16-18; Hebrews 3:1,2; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:4-10; Hebrews 7:1-3; Hebrews 7:23-28; Hebrews 8:1,2

I wish to speak, dear brethren, of the priesthood of Christ. The priesthood of Christ is for those who have faith. It says, He does not take hold of angels by the hand, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham. That is, it is not only that the priesthood of Christ is not for angels, but it is not for *all* men, it is for those who are the seed of Abraham. That is, it is for those who are of faith, those who have embraced the gospel, and who, by means of the gospel have been called by God. We are spoken of in the beginning of chapter 3, as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," Abraham typically was called with a heavenly calling, he was called to go out from the land of his birth, and to go to a land which God was going to show him, and he went out, Scripture says, not knowing whither he went. He is thus a picture of those whom God has called by the gospel, who are called with a heavenly calling and go out on the principle of faith, and marked by faith, not knowing exactly where we are going. We know the end of our journey, but the exact detail of it, that is, the road by which we reach it, may not be known. Faith gives us light for the next step, and it is well to bear that in mind, that the path of faith is not a path in which you see the whole course plainly marked out before you in all the detail of it. We know what the goal is, but as regards the detail of the path, faith has light for the next step, and that is the principle upon which a Christian has to move, that he moves in faith, God giving him light as to the next step. Well now, the priesthood of Christ is for such, it is for those who are partakers of a heavenly calling. And it is peculiarly affecting, because it brings into prominence His manhood, as something upon which He has entered, and in which He has moved, in order to be able sympathetically, and feelingly, to support His own in a similar path. Obviously a path of faith does not attach to God, but a path of faith does attach to man as having received light from God, and in order that we might be sustained in the path of faith, the Lord Himself, the Son of God, entered into manhood, and, as having become Man, entered into the circumstances proper to man, in order that in those circumstances He might move rightly according to man in relation to God; and as having completed His own course, might be able to furnish support and sympathy to those who are still in the path. Now that is peculiarly affecting. And the experience of the priesthood of Christ has the effect of attaching the hearts of the saints individually to Him, and so the pathway is peculiarly valuable in that way. It serves, as taken up with God, to deepen us in attachment of heart to Christ.

And now in the first passage we read it says, "It behoved him in all things to be made like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God." That is another thing to bear in mind, that the priesthood is in things relating to God. The priesthood is a necessity because we are called to engage in this world in the service of God, and to maintain the service of God. The service of God is never to be allowed to lapse. In the old economy God was most particular to indicate what He required from His people every day and then every sabbath, and then every month, and then also on the set feasts. But what He required every day was never to lapse; the others were all additional. So He clearly indicated that *His* service, which *He* took pleasure in,

was to be maintained day in and day out, and that He looked to His people to provide it. But then, that was to be continued in the wilderness. The service of God at the present time takes form in the wilderness. It will go on eternally in heaven, where there are no conditions that are opposed to it, but the glory of the present time is that the service of God can be maintained on the earth, in the very presence of unholy conditions all around us. Although the saints are surrounded by unholy influences, the glory of the present time is that the service of God *can* be maintained by them in the holiness that is befitting to it, and it is in that setting that the priesthood of Christ comes in. The priesthood of Christ has not as its object the relieving us of pressure and trial merely, in order that we might be saved trials; the priesthood of Christ comes in, in order that, in temptation or in pressure, or in trial, we might not be overcome and thus rendered unequal to continuing in the service of God. The priesthood of God is in things relating to God. It has in mind that the saints should be supported, and preserved in superiority, to all that which is around them, in order that God should not lose His portion, and in order, too, that the portion that He looks for, should be rendered to Him in holiness. And so we are addressed as holy brethren, for that is what we are, dear brethren. Alas! at times our conduct might belie it, but as having been redeemed by the blood of Christ and received the Holy Spirit, we are holy brethren, we are constituted that, set apart by the death of Christ on the one hand, and by the Holy Spirit on the other, from all that is displeasing to God. We are *holy* brethren, constituted such, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," and we are called upon to *consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus. The epistle to the Hebrews is full of allusions to "Jesus." That is,

the Lord is presented in the epistle to the Hebrews, not so much in an official light, although there are official positions, including that of High Priest, referred to in the epistle: but the Lord is constantly referred to by His personal Name of *Jesus*, and that is intended to effect in us, attachment of heart to

Himself personally. Jesus is the Name by which He is known by Christians, and it is a personal Name, involving indeed, the truth of His Person - for the Name means, "Jehovah the Saviour" - but it speaks of the *Man*, the Man who has won and holds the affections of those who belong to Him. And so we are to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus. And first of all it says, He is "faithful to him that has constituted him." He is faithful to God, faithful in all God's house; not as Moses was, as a ministering servant, but, as Son. That refers to what He is on God's behalf, that He is set over God's house as Son. That is, He is not a servant. He is the Son, and He is over God's house with all the holy and jealous affections as to what is due to God, that characterise Him as Son, and so there is One in charge of God's house, who is over it as Son. That ensures that nothing will be allowed to pass in the house of God, that is not suitable to God. Christ is over it for God's pleasure, as Son. But then He is also officiating in the service of God, or in relation to the things of God, as *Priest*, and that presents what He is on our side. As Apostle He has come out *from* God *to* us; as High Priest He has gone in on our behalf, to God. Both offices unite in Christ. Typically Moses was the apostle, and Aaron was the high priest, but when it comes to Christianity, both offices are taken up by Christ.

Well now, it says in this passage in chapter 2, and also in the passage in chapter 4, that He has been tempted. "In that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted." And then again in chapter 4, "We have not a High Priest, not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart." It is what *we* have. Now the gospels are given us, in order that we might gain an impression of the way that Jesus has qualified for His office as High Priest. "It behoved him in all things to be made like to his brethren." He did not, as having become Man, assume a position in the world different from that which other men would fill: from that which those who are partakers of a heavenly calling would fill. He did not enter upon a condition as Man, in which He was free from the vicissitudes of human life, and not exposed to temptations. He did not do that. He could have done so if He had pleased, but it behoved Him in *all* things to be made like unto His brethren. That is, having become Man, He entered into circumstances exactly similar, sin apart, to those in which those who are the seed of Abraham would find themselves. And hence we find, that the circumstances into which Jesus entered, as having become Man, were not such as would excite the envy or emulation of others. It was not much to be desired, to live at Nazareth. It was not greatly to be desired to work as a carpenter. That is to say, these are not things that human ambition would look at as great, or desire as something to be coveted after. The Lord did not enter

into exceptional circumstances as a Man here. He entered into circumstances such as would be found to be the lot of the humblest of those who should be the partakers of the heavenly calling. And in those circumstances He moved on the principle of obedience to God in all things, on the principle of contentment, finding His all in God: He moved on lines that were open to every one of us. And then we find that He was tempted. You might have thought that it was an extraordinary thing that the Creator should place Himself in a position as Man, in which His creature, the devil, could approach Him with wicked insinuations and suggestions. And yet He did. Why was that? Because the partakers of the heavenly calling would find themselves in conditions in which they were exposed to the temptations of the devil. The Lord went into the wilderness and was tempted of the devil; was tempted of the devil continuously for *forty* days, and during that time He hungered. He fasted and was tempted of the devil, we are told that the devil came up to Him. The devil exhausted every temptation, but we are given details of three, and only three, but they are sufficient to indicate the lines upon which the Lord met the tempter. The tempter said, "If thou be Son of God, speak to this stone, that it become bread," because he knew the Lord was hungry. The Lord had been fasting for forty days and would be hungry, and the tempter knew it, and so he presented his temptation in a way that was calculated, with any other man, to cause him to succumb. But thank God, what came to light was, that in the Man Christ Jesus He had introduced a Man who was incorruptible. One who could not be corrupted, but at the same time He met the temptation in a way that is becoming to *any* man or any woman. He met it on these lines. He said, "It is written." "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." That is to say, the word of God was that which regulated Him, and if the word of God indicated that man was not to live by bread alone, but by every word of God that he was to move as dependent on the word of God, and regulate himself by it, then He would move on those lines. And so the devil was foiled. The Lord said, It is written. He had the word of God in His heart. That is a most important matter, dear brethren. We are greatly exposing ourselves to Satan's attacks if we do not continually, and assiduously, read the word of God. Because the word of God in the mind and in the heart is that which the Spirit of God can use as occasion requires. If we have never read Deuteronomy, for instance, we shall never have read these particular scriptures that the Lord quotes, save as finding them in the gospel quoted. But they are there in Deuteronomy, and hence the importance of reading *all* the Scriptures, and reading them consistently and perseveringly, whether we understand them at the time we read them or not, because as they come into the mind and are retained there, they become material which the Spirit can remind us of and use for our help as occasion requires. And the Lord had the

word of God in His heart. And so Satan meets Him with the second temptation - I am referring to the way in which it is presented in the gospel of Luke - and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and tells the Lord that He shall have all the power and glory of them if He will bow down and worship him. That is, Satan knew well that if he presented to any other man what would so pander to the pride and ambition of man, he was sure to gain an inlet. And he approached the Lord with that which he had found successful in other men, but the Lord said, "It is written, thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him *alone* shalt thou serve." Satan had said, If thou wilt bow down and worship *me*, the Lord said, It is written that man shall worship the Lord his God and Him only shall he serve, as much as to say, I am not going to worship *you*, I am going to worship Jehovah My God. I am not going to be diverted from worshipping Jehovah My God to worship anyone else. That is how the Lord answered him. It is a question of what is proper to a man in relation to God, and He met him on those lines. And then similarly when the devil suggested to Him that He should cast Himself down, and the devil subtly brought in what was written: he saw that the Lord met him with what was written, and so the devil said, Well now *I* can quote Scripture, I will tell you what is written! "It is written that he shall give charge to his angels concerning thee, to keep thee and on their hands they shall bear thee, lest in any wise thou strike thy foot against a stone." But the Lord said, "It is *said*, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." As much as to say, it is not a question merely of what is written in the letter, it is a question of what God is *saying*. You need to understand what God is saying. If you take Scripture simply in the letter, you may take it out of its context. Satan can do that, and misapply it, but the point is we want to know what God is saying. And so when the devil quoted Scripture, the Lord met him by saying, "It is *said*, Thou shalt *not* tempt the Lord thy God." That indicates, dear brethren, the lines upon which the Lord met temptation. He did not meet it as God, exercising Godhead power to deal with a creature; He met him on the lines proper to a man in his relations with God, and therefore He is qualified to exercise priesthood in regard of those who are partakers of the heavenly calling. Any of us can move on those lines. The Lord is indicating the lines on which we shall be preserved, and He will support us by His sympathy and by His influence, by reminding us that He Himself has moved on those lines, that He Himself has had to feel what it was to be tempted by Satan. Not that there was anything in Him to respond to the evil, that has to be safely guarded, but at the same time He would feel intensely in His spirit, the evil of the suggestion. It would be repulsive to Him. He would suffer in His spirit as having evil suggested to Him. I doubt if we have any true sense of how the Lord suffered in spirit as going through this evil world. How repulsive everything must have been to Him! But He went

through it patiently and enduringly, and governed by the principles that should govern a man in relation to God. And so we read, "Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession." He has passed right through the heavens. He has gone into the immediate presence of God, and He is there on our behalf too. It is a good thing for us to recognise, that Jesus has passed through the heavens, and He is the Son of God, and He has gone in for us, right into the immediate presence of God, in all the acceptability of the Son of God, and the place that Jesus is filling in the presence of God marks out the place that God has set us in. So that our service God-ward is not to be marked by distance, but it is to be marked by nearness, in the consciousness that the place that Jesus fills He fills as forerunner for *us*.

Well now, in chapter 5, we have a further touching scripture, for it alludes to the intensity of the sufferings of Christ, and it also stresses that His being Son was one of the qualifications for His priesthood. In the first chapter He is presented as the Apostle, the Apostle of our confession, and the second Psalm is quoted in that connection in that chapter, "Thou art my son, I have today begotten thee." That is, the Lord as the Apostle is the One who comes out from God to set out what Christianity is, what the mind of God is, and the characteristic feature of it is sonship. It is set out in Christ, Thou art my Son, I have today begotten Thee. That is the first feature of the Name that is brought out in the first chapter, and in that chapter He is presented as Apostle. That is, the light of God's mind for us is conveyed in Christ, and the first thought that is brought to our notice is that of sonship, "Thou art my Son, I have *today* begotten thee." But now in this chapter, Psalm 2 is quoted again, but quoted now as an evidence that He is marked out as Priest. It says, "Thus the Christ also has not glorified himself to be made a high priest, but he who had said to him, Thou art my Son, *I* have today begotten thee." So that when God saluted Christ as His Son, He was marking Him out as the One whom He would have in His presence as High Priest, on behalf of, and as representative of, those whom God had called. Now that is most assuring to us, dear brethren. Nothing more blessed than to have the sense that the One who represents us in the presence of God is there as His *Son*, in all the affection and in all the nearness and liberty that that implies. That is to be before our hearts as a feature of the Priesthood of Christ. But then, in order that He might be qualified, in view of all that we are called upon to pass through, it says, Though He were Son. Notwithstanding the dignity of who He is in His Person, "Though he were Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." Now it has often been said, and it is well worth repeating, that He did *not* learn to be obedient. He did not need to *learn to be* obedient. We

often have to learn to be obedient, because our wills are insubject to God, and we need to *learn* to be obedient. But the Lord did not have to learn to be obedient, but He did learn obedience from the things He suffered. That is to say, obedience was an entirely new principle for Him. Obedience does not apply to God, obviously, and when the Lord was in the form of God, obedience did not apply to Him, obedience was an unknown experience to Him. But having become Man, then He had entered into a condition to which obedience applied, and therefore He had to learn obedience. It was a new experience for Him, one says it reverently, that having become Man, He who was God, He had entered into a condition to which entirely new experiences applied, and the governing principle of manhood in relation to God is obedience. And therefore the Lord as having entered into manhood learned obedience, and He learned obedience as fully tested. That is to say, He did not enter into manhood in conditions that were wholly congenial, but rather He entered into manhood in conditions that were extremely testing. God ordered it so, in order that obedience should be proved in its fulness and its perfection in Jesus. And so He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. It says, "who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties, to him who was able to save him out of death" - not save Him *from* death but save Him out of it. Obedience required that He should go the *whole* way into death, in all that death meant for Him. But He made supplication and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him *out of death*. He went into death in confidence that God would not leave His soul in hades, but He would show Him the paths of life. Psalm 16 tells us that. But this chapter specially alludes, I have no doubt, to the garden of Gethsemane. I do not say it is entirely limited to that, but it specially alludes to the garden of Gethsemane. We are given the account in Matthew and Mark and Luke, of the garden of Gethsemane, in order that we might be subdued in our spirits as we see what was entailed for the Lord Jesus in the path of obedience upon which He had entered. The whole will of God was in His heart, and if that was to be effectuated He must needs face the cross, and all that the cross meant to Him as the place where He would be abandoned of God, and would endure the judgment of God, He Himself being made sin. I doubt if our minds can ever compass what that involved. That He who knew no sin, should be made sin. Think of how abhorrent it would be to Christ to be made sin, and think of what was involved when He *had* been made sin,

that He should bear the judgment of God on sin, unsparingly, without any mitigation. He does not ask for mitigation. He says on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou far from my salvation, from the words of my groaning?" But He does not ask for any mitigation, rather, He

vindicates God, for He says, "Thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel." But Gethsemane was not the actual abandonment. Gethsemane was not the judgment of God. But Gethsemane was the anticipating of it, with Satan bringing to bear upon His spirit how dreadful, how terrible, the cross would be for *Him*, in order, if possible, to get Him to turn aside from it. And so we read that He cried in the garden, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," There were His holy feelings in regard of what was involved, and liberty to desire that if it were possible, it might be removed from Him; but *all* governed by this, "Not my will, but thine be done." And then a second time He prayed saying, "O my Father, if this may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." There was complete acceptance of what was involved, feeling it rightly with holy sensibilities, and having liberty to ask that if it were possible it might be removed, but as I said, *entirely* governed by this one consideration, "Not as I will but as thou wilt." Mark tells us that He fell upon the earth and said, "Abba Father!" - stressing the depths of feeling that were called forth at that time. And Luke tells us that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, and that an angel appeared from heaven strengthening Him. So that the three accounts are given us. The Lord would give us some impression of what this means, when it says, "With *strong* crying and tears." And strong crying and tears would show how real was the test which the Lord was facing, but it only served to bring out how absolutely perfect, how absolutely enduring was the obedience of Christ. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. And now, dear brethren, if we become faced, in the path of God's will, with something which *we* find to be very testing, it can *never* under any circumstances be comparable with that. But if we do become faced, as going along in the path of God's will, with something which is testing to us, then you can see how effective the Lord's priesthood can be to us. How sympathetic He can be to us. He can tells us, I have been tested, I have learned to the full what the path of obedience involves, but I went through on that principle of obedience, not My will but Thine be done, putting My trust in God. I faced death on that principle. And God has answered it and raised Him from among the dead, and set Him in the highest place in glory. And now the Lord from that place can say to *any* saint who is tested, who finds the path of obedience testing to him, He can say, You have *all* My support if you continue on the line of obedience. If you deflect from the line of obedience I cannot support you in that, but you continue on the line of obedience and you will get *all* My support and *all* My sympathy. You can see how real the priesthood of Christ is, dear brethren. And so it says, "Having been heard on account of his piety, though he were Son, he learned obedience from the things which he suffered; and having been perfected,

became to all them that obey him, Author of eternal salvation." You see the link. *He* has learned obedience, and now it is those who obey Him who get the gain of His priesthood. We *never* get the gain of Christ's priesthood if we are rebellious, or disobedient. We may have His advocacy indeed, but we will never get the gain of Christ's priesthood so long as we are disobedient or rebellious. The priesthood of Christ is to support the saints who wish to be obedient in the path of obedience. And therefore it says, "Having been perfected, became to all them that obey him, Author of eternal salvation, addressed by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec."

But now I wish to pass on to speak for a moment of Melchisedec. When we come to chapter 7, the Spirit of God goes back to the occasion of the introduction of Melchisedec. Melchisedec is a mysterious personage. We read of him in the fourteenth of Genesis. He is introduced abruptly in the one incident in which he met Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings, and then we hear of him no more until David writes the 110th Psalm, and in that Psalm it is said, "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." And then we hear no more of him again until we come to the epistle to the Hebrews. And it is only in Genesis 14, and Psalm 110 and the epistle to the Hebrews, that Melchisedec is mentioned, and yet he is such an important personage, because he is intended to direct our attention to the Son of God, and the Son of God in the glory of His Person, as having neither beginning nor end of days, and as having now taken up priesthood according to God's will, a priesthood that is *never* going to fail, and *never* going to be surrendered, because the priesthood is now a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, and Melchisedec represents Christ as Priest in the power of indissoluble life. Well now, this Melchisedec was priest of the Most High God, and as Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchisedec went out and met him with bread and wine, and said, "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, ...and blessed be the Most High God." So that he typifies the Lord, not now as supporting us exactly in the presence of great pressure, but as supporting us in the sense that we belong to a heavenly system, and therefore we are not to become entangled with, or diverted by, anything on this earth. Melchisedec is presented as priest of the Most High God, and he said, "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth," That is, he brought before Abram, that the possessor of the heavens and earth, the Most High God, was being served. There was the priest - Melchisedec was there before Him. And he brought forward bread and wine to sustain Abram. I have very little doubt it is a veiled allusion to the Supper. Not that we speak of the wine in connection with the Supper, but there is a kind of veiled allusion, I believe, to the way the Lord would serve us

week after week, in order to maintain in our souls the sense that we belong to a heavenly system of divine service. The Supper leads up to that, and it is renewed week after week, and is intended continually to remind us that we have part, through the grace of God, in the service of God in its most exalted form. We know God in a way that is greater and more blessed, than any other family. And so the Lord would sustain us in the sense of that, so that we should not be in any way entangled by what is going on around us, or in any way carried away by anything that is worldly in its nature. You can easily understand that Abram might have tended to be a little bit elated. He had taken a long journey in love for his brother, and he had won a great victory over the kings, and he had brought back his brother Lot and all the property, and the danger might be that Abram might be elated, and any of us is in danger at times of being elated: we may have served in a measure of spiritual power, but that is just the moment when we are in danger of being elated. The moment when spiritual power is experienced is *just* the moment when we most need support lest we should be elated, and as elated, give place in our minds and souls to some element of this world and of the devil, such as the element of pride and of self-satisfaction. So Melchisedec comes forward and gives him bread and wine, and reminds him that he, Abram, is blessed of the Most High God, Possessor of heavens and earth. And then Melchisedec blessed the Most High God, as though to suggest to Abram that that is what he is to be engaged in. He is to be engaged in the service of God. And the more we engage in the service of God, dear brethren, not formally, but in truth and in liberty which the Holy Spirit affords, the more we shall be preserved from any kind of element of pride or self-satisfaction or anything that is worldly, that is if we *truly* come into the presence of God. Of course, it is possible to engage in a form of service and not be true or in liberty in it. The golden calf shows that. The people could make a golden calf and proclaim a feast to Jehovah. And they danced before the golden calf and said, "This is thy god, Israel, who has brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and yet it was a feast to Jehovah. So they were ostensibly engaging in the service of Jehovah, and yet what they had done was to cast the gold that they had into a mould, and their thoughts of God were in that set mould, and henceforward their service would be in just exactly the same mould, nothing living about it, and that is something that we have always to guard against. But the Spirit of God is the great answer to that, the great preservative. And so, as I say, Melchisedec supported Abram in order that he might be maintained having his part in the service of the blessed God.

Well now we come on to the end of the passage, and it says, He abides a Priest continually, and then in verse 24 of chapter 7, "He, because of his continuing for ever has the priesthood unchangeable. Whence also he is able

to save *completely* those who approach by him to God, always living to intercede for them." We have to experience pressure, we have to know what it is to be tested of the devil, we have to experience these things. Do not let us think when we are tempted of the devil that we must give way, because there is no reason why we *should* give way. But we have to experience temptation, and we *have* to experience pressure, but the priesthood of Christ is always available to us, and let us bear in mind that we are partakers of the heavenly calling, and that what we have been called to is to serve God. The service of God in the liberty and holy conditions proper to it is what we are called to, and we must be watchful of anything that is going to disqualify us for it. And in the exercises connected with it, we shall find that the priesthood of Christ is always available to us. He always lives. It says, He is able to save completely those who approach by Him to God, always living to intercede for them, and then it says, "For such a High Priest became us." *Such* a High Priest became *us*. It shows, if we may say so humbly, how great the saints are, that such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, become higher than the heavens. Then it says, "for the law constitutes men high priests having infirmity; but the word of the swearing of the oath which is after the law, a Son perfected for ever." God has *sworn*. Jehovah hath sworn and will not repent, thou art Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. So that the priesthood of Christ, in the value of who He is in His own Person, abides continually for the support of the saints in the service of God. So we can well understand the writer saying, Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum, or a summary, "We have *such* a one High Priest", (*such a one*), "who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens; minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man." That is, *we* have Him as High Priest, but He is minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched. That is, He is concerned with the service of God, that is what the Lord is concerned with. He is minister of the sanctuary, He is in charge of the whole service, and we have such an One, in order that we may be sustained in our own part in the service, whatever may surround us down here.

Well, may the Lord help us, dear brethren, to appreciate the priesthood of Christ more and avail ourselves of it. There is the glory of His Person as the Son of God on the one hand, filling that position in the presence of God for us unceasingly, and then there is the moral glory and great attractiveness of the way by which He has made Himself able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, a sympathetic High Priest, in the way that He has suffered, being

tempted, and He has learned obedience by the things He suffered. May the Lord bless the word to us.

WORK

1 Thessalonians 4: 9 - 12; Proverbs 31: 10 - 31

I wish, dear brethren, to say a little as to work, and the importance that God attaches to work. The Lord said when He was here, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," and we read of the Holy Spirit, "But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit," 1 Corinthians 12: 11. So that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all presented to us as working.

God worked in creation for six days, day after day, and then on the seventh day He rested and sanctified it, and called upon His people Israel later to hallow the Sabbath day in order that He might convey that while the normal thing is to work, He also cherishes the thought of rest, and would give His people to enter into rest with Him. So that the thought of the Sabbath goes right through Scripture. One of the most important references to it, in actual application to ourselves, being in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, where the manna is given, and where we are told that they ate manna for six days; gathering it each day afresh, and then on the seventh day found none. Of course it was the Sabbath and God had provided on the sixth day a double amount to carry them over the seventh. The teaching of that is that if we habituate ourselves to feeding on manna, in connection with the ordinary responsibilities of daily life, six days feeding on manna will lead to a seventh day of rest. The more we accustom ourselves to feeding on manna, the more we shall find rest in our souls. That is the principle. That however much we may have to do, and God expects that His people should have plenty to do, we should learn to find rest in the middle of what we do have to do: rest of mind and heart, as finding in the manna, Christ once humbled here, the principle of obedience to God's will... That is what the manna represents. We should find in the daily circumstances of our ordinary life, that which will give us rest in our souls. The Lord says in Matthew, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls." Take my yoke! Learn from me! That is the appropriating of the manna. "And ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Now I was saying that God is presented to us as working, steadily working, and indeed, He is still working. On the sixth day He brought in the man and the woman. He created man and He blessed them and set them over the works of His hands. It looks on to the day to come when Christ and the assembly will be in supreme headship over things in heaven and earth. In that day God will rest, but now He is working.

In Genesis we find that man was set to work in chapters 2 and 3. In the second chapter we find that God planted a garden; He wanted a garden for His pleasure, and then He placed the man in it to till it and to guard it. That is, God set man to work. Not in a slavish way, but with a view to preserving what was for the pleasure of God in the garden. I have no doubt that the garden of Eden was a type of the assembly in this world, the spot on earth that God would secure and maintain for His own pleasure in the presence of evil. Evil had already come into the world at that time. Satan and his angels had sinned, and evil was there although it had not yet covered the earth. God chose to plant a garden as a sphere which He would have for His pleasure, and He gave man the responsibility of tilling and guarding it. That is the most exalted kind of work: that we should have charge of His interests in this world, and set ourselves to promote those interests and to guard them. In Genesis 3, you find that man sins, and then God sets him to work in another way as part of His governmental ways with him. It says in verse 19, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return." That is, God introduced hard labour. You might say that hard labour is part of His governmental ways with man as a result of his sin, and that remains to this day.

It is a very serious matter for any of us to ignore the governmental consequences of the ordering of God that man should work. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," it says. He also brought in at the same time, certain governmental consequences on the woman, and they remain until this day; but man has to work in the sweat of his brow, and that is part of God's governmental ways with man. Thus it is important that we should understand that it is for everyone of us to submit ourselves to it, in lowliness and subjection. As some of us were saying yesterday, God's ways in government always have in mind the furtherance of His ways in blessing. He has taken us up for blessing before the foundation of the world, and His ways with us, what He orders for us, have in mind the further promotion of the blessing which He has taken us up for, according to His purpose. Hence, in this passage in Thessalonians, the apostle is commending the brethren saying, that he had no need to write to them as to brotherly love, "for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. For also ye do this towards all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia: but we exhort you, brethren, to abound still more; and to seek earnestly to be quiet, and mind your own affairs, and work with your own hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk reputably towards those without, and may have need of no one." That is a remarkable exhortation from the Lord by the apostle Paul to every one of us - to work with our own hands,

so that we may be walking with a good reputation among those without, that there should be no discredit brought on the testimony, and we should have need of no one. Not to be dependent on others. The Lord would set us to see that we work, and that we should in that way have a good reputation and ability to look after our own affairs, and have need of no one. All this is very practicable, and as you read Scripture, especially the epistles, you find that Christianity is not intended to alter the state of things in the world. The world has, of course, greatly benefited by its influence, but God does not intend to set aside the inequalities that exist among men; for some are servants and some employers: but God does not upset that. He rather brings in the power to adorn the doctrine *as* a servant, and the power to adorn the doctrine *as* an employer. The epistles are full of this. We shall find that Ephesians 6, Colossians 3 and 4, 1 Peter, 1 Timothy 6, this epistle (1 Thessalonians), and 2 Thessalonians, all touch on this question. This practical question of our working and how we are to conduct ourselves if we are servants, and how we are to conduct ourselves if we are masters. All these are practical matters which the Spirit of God takes up and they are part of our discipline. Discipline belongs to us all as children, and as sons. Hebrews 12 shows that every one of us comes in for discipline *because* we are sons. "Ye endure for chastening, God conducts himself towards you as towards sons; for who is the son that the father chastens not? But if ye are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Moreover we have had the fathers of our flesh as chasteners, and we reverenced them; shall be not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" And our employment day by day, the necessity of going on day in and day out, is part of the discipline that God has ordained for us. It is intended to help us in our spirits, and to develop in us the spirit of subjection and the spirit of dependence on God. And all intended to further the work of God with us, that we should be sons, and practical sons: not only by title, but sons as characterised by the affections and dignity and the subjection and all that is proper to sons who have God as their Father.

Now before I pass on, I urge the brethren to bear in mind that there are those two kinds of work that God has ordained for man. I hope to speak in a moment of the more exalted kind of work, but first, there is the kind of work that comes upon us in God's governmental ways. The women have their governmental consequences, and of course, the women have to work too, they work in the house. But the men particularly have to recognise that God's government requires that they work and work hard and continuously, until the time that they come to die, if they have the ability to do so. There is also the more privileged and exalted kind of work. God placed the man in the garden

to till it, and to guard it. Tilling would involve work. If, as I have no doubt, the garden of Eden is rightly regarded as a type of the assembly at the present time, as that which is intended peculiarly to afford pleasure to the heart of Christ and the heart of God; we can regard the man as placed in it, first as a type of the Lord in charge of all divine pleasure on the earth, and then also, the saints as with Him in it.

I read this passage in Proverbs because it gives us a kind of full-size picture of the assembly as marked by great activity, or those of the assembly characterised by great activity in relation to the interests of Christ; and that is the most exalted kind of work. The apostle says to the Corinthians at the end of chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians, "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immoveable, abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." We are always to be abounding in the work of the Lord. That does not simply mean preaching or giving addresses, it means that there is plenty to do to look after the interests of Christ, and every one of us has to be abounding in it. There is no scripture that gives us a picture of this activity like Proverbs 31. It says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." It describes this woman of worth. I need not say that the assembly is the true antitype of the woman that God provided for the man at the outset. God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help-meet his like" - and He provided the woman to be a help for the man in all the interests God had entrusted to him. That was looking on to the assembly as given to Christ, to be with Him in all the interests that are under the hand of Christ at the present time. We must not think that the Lord is inactive, because He has gone to the right hand of God; He is very active. He is carrying on much in the way of work. *He* is not inactive. Joseph, a type of the Lord Jesus, was a man who had many affairs to look after. He came home for a meal at noon, like many of us. He was a man of many affairs, and in that way he is a picture of the Lord Jesus with the many affairs that He has under His hand. He is working all over the world, and has many interests. Every local company is a matter of concern to the Lord, but in those interests He wants to have the assembly with Him as a help-mate. That is one way in which we may show our love for the Lord Jesus. The woman was to become the wife, to enter into the relationship of affection which she would never lose. A true wife will show her affection by looking after the every interest of her husband, and every interest of Christ is to be of interest to us. Once we get an impression of how Christ loved the assembly, we become the wife by looking after the interests of the husband. That means that every interest of Christ in the world at the present time is to be a matter of interest to us. Maybe we can only take a part in our own locality, but

nevertheless, there is something for the interest of Christ. The assembly is to be preserved, the saints looked after, the truth ministered, the young looked after, the elderly cared for: all these things enter into this matter of the "work of the Lord," and "abounding always in the work of the Lord."

Then what is seen in this woman is that "her husband confideth in her, and he shall have no lack of spoil. She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life." Let me apply this figure of a garden for God, and a garden for the Lord. We know that the idea of a garden is that it is to yield special pleasure to the one to whom it belongs. A person has a big estate, and it may have many fields, but near the house he will have a garden; not a very large one, but the garden will be specially cultivated in order to provide pleasure to the one who owns it. It is intended to provide special pleasure to the one to whom it belongs. Transfer that idea to any one of our local companies. Take account of the local company at Orange Hill as one of the gardens of the Lord. It is intended to provide special pleasure to the heart of Christ and to the heart of God, and it is certain that evil will find its way into that garden which consists of the saints, each one a tree with roots hidden in the soil, but the result of the roots comes out in fruitfulness and blossoms for the pleasure of God. Every saint is a tree, and anyone who knows anything about agriculture or horticulture, will know that trees require caring for. I do not profess to know much about these things, but trees and plants require caring for and looking after. It certainly is so in regard of the trees that the Father has planted. "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up," Matthew 15: 13. The trees which the Father has planted will not be rooted up, but they need to be cared for. If a garden is not cared for, weeds will soon grow, and weeds are things that would interfere with the pleasure of the person to whom the garden belongs. If we transfer the idea of the garden to a local company, every one of the brethren in the company is not only a tree, a part of the garden, but he is part of the assembly, to be with Christ in the maintenance of the interests of God in that garden. We must take up responsibility to have our part in caring for it. So, "Her husband confideth in her, and he shall have no lack of spoil. She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life." Day after day she is doing her husband good. Are we doing the Lord good day after day? Day after day we have to recognise governmentally that we have to work and earn our own living, and accept the discipline that is involved, and get the gain of it as subject to the Father's hand; but in addition to that, there is always some feature of the Lord's interests to be cared for day after day.

Then it says, "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." As you read the passage you will be surprised at the references to her

hands, showing she is a worker and that she works willingly with her hands. Wool is for warmth. It may be the brethren here do not need much wool, but in some countries wool is very acceptable and very essential. Wool is love among the brethren.

There is nothing like the warmth of love. So in the passage read in 1 Thessalonians, the apostle says, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. For also ye do this towards all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia; but we exhort you brethren to abound still more." It is a question of the promotion and development of love. Then it says, "She seeketh... flax." That is practical righteousness, for flax is on the basis of linen. She answers to what is such a prominent feature in the first epistle of John, that we are to be marked by righteousness and love. All this is going to promote the good of the local company. If I do not follow righteousness, if I am not concerned that all my ways are right in the sight of God, I am allowing an opening to the enemy to get in. The responsibility of the man was not only to till the garden, but to guard it. If I am not maintaining what is right in the sight of God in every relationship in which God has set me, I am opening a door for the enemy to get in.

This woman's activities are of great importance. "She is like the merchants' ships: she bringeth her food from afar." That is a reference to the exercise there should be in every local company, to see that we derive our supplies from the Holy Spirit, that we bring our food from afar. That will ensure freshness in the meetings. We do not merely depend on our mental knowledge, but we are dependent on Christ in heaven and the Spirit here. You say, Christ is far off! But thank God He is near in the Spirit and we are to be built up in all His fulness. The fulness of Christ is near to us in the Spirit and may be brought in in constant freshness for the building up of the souls of the saints. All these are features of the faithfulness of the virtuous woman. If we can only get into our minds and souls that Christ loves the assembly, and has given Himself for it, and she is to be a true wife to Him; I believe it will greatly promote the desire with every one of us to play our part in caring for His interests. That is how the affection of the faithful wife shows itself, she is faithful to Him in all His business, and this should give character to our lives.

"She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and the day's work to her maidens." There is not a suggestion of anything in the nature of idleness. She sets the example. Those who are older, and those who lead should set an example to the younger ones. It is one of the most important things in Scripture that there should be examples set by those who lead in any company and those who are older. Although the apostle at

Thessalonica and Ephesus had a right to devote himself to the Lord's work and rely on the saints to support him, he did not exercise that right. He wanted to set an example of working with his own hands. Although he introduced the most exalted truth at Ephesus, he worked with his own hands, and as he leaves he says, "These hands have ministered to my wants, and to those who were with me. I have showed you all things, that thus labouring we ought to come in aid of the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus the apostle was exemplifying it that the brethren might take it on. It is an important thing that those who take the lead should be an example to those who are younger.

"She considereth a field, and acquireth it; of the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard." I take it that means she is alert to any fresh exercise the Lord is bringing forward. She would consider it with a view to securing it. A field is a fresh area from which fruit can be brought forth for the pleasure of God, a crop of harvest. If the Lord brings forward any fresh feature of the truth, He means that it should hold something further for God. She does not ignore anything fresh that is being brought out in ministry, she gets to the Lord, and if it is of God, she is exercised to make it her own. These are the lines on which the interests of God can be cared for.

"She perceiveth that her earning is good; her lamp goeth not out by night." This has a moral bearing on us. *This* is the night - not that we can do without a night's sleep - but this is the night of the Lord's absence, and there is no room for idleness nor slothfulness. Her lamp must not go out. There is no room for slackening of exercise. The lamp is maintained burning throughout the night. Until the Lord comes, the light should burn for the pleasure of God in every place in which He has set us in responsibility.

"She stretcheth out her hand to the afflicted, and she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Hand, or palm as is suggested in the note, suggests peculiar sensitiveness and tenderness. She is caring for those who are in affliction. Then it says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh body linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." There we have the thought of clothing again, body linen, that which is nearest to the person standing for practical righteousness and holiness. She is concerned about it. This is a most important matter. It means what I really am, not what I may appear to be. God does not look on the outward appearance He looks on the heart. It is the garment nearest to the person that is in mind here. In Exodus when we are told about the clothing of the priests, the first thing that is mentioned is linen vests, and that is the article of clothing that is nearest to the person. I have no doubt it refers to our

being practically righteous and concerned about our conduct. That is important in connection with priestly service God-ward. "She maketh body linen, and *selleth* it."

She would bring home to the brethren that this is something to be acquired on the principle of sacrifice. She is not giving it away, she is selling it. Others will be buying. It says, "Buy the truth and sell it not." *We* have to do the buying. So every feature of the truth that calls for a subjective answer calls for the element of buying.

Then it says, "She delivereth girdles." That refers to service, serving love. You remember in John 13 the Lord laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself. A girdle is an emblem of service. The Lord took on what was really a bondman's service, the most menial service. Washing the disciples' feet in order to set an example of serving love. This woman makes girdles and sells *them* to the merchants. That also has to be bought, and she is setting the example. We have to learn how to serve the saints in love. All this shows the different forms that service of love would take, and these things are to be going on all the time. The caring for, the promotion and the preservation of what is for the pleasure of God in every locality. We read that "she surveyeth the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done worthily, but thou excellest them all." It is a beautiful picture of the kind of activities that the Lord is looking for in those of the assembly. It is to take shape in every place where His name is cherished and the truth of the assembly is valued. This kind of activity is intended to be in evidence as we recognise we are of the assembly as Christ's wife, so to speak. It is not legal work, but activity in work that is the result of understanding that we have a place in the affections of the heart of Christ, and we have a privilege and a duty to see that we are constantly labouring in the work of the Lord to ensure the promotion of all that is for His pleasure in any locality, and that all that would militate against it, is excluded. We must maintain self-judgment in ourselves, and we may be able to help others. So it says in 1 Corinthians 15: 58: "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immoveable, abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Now that includes brothers and sisters. It is not gifted brothers, or prominent brothers or leading brothers; it is brothers and sisters, old and young, and it says, "abounding *always*." This chapter in Proverbs 31 gives us some little idea, as we understand what some of the terms mean, of the many different ways in which we may be engaged in this most exalted form of work that God has in mind for His people. But let us also remind ourselves of the form of work that has come on us in the government of God, and we must

submit ourselves to this and see that we have part in it. No one can resist the government of God without suffering for it, but if we accept it and submit ourselves to the discipline that it brings from day to day, we shall gain by it and we shall find that God will help us in our souls to develop in features that are pleasing to Himself: and that is what all His ways with us have in mind.

That is all I had in mind, dear brethren, the two kinds of work which have to be going on all the time, and the importance of it. The exalted character of work in the service of God, and that which comes upon us in God's governmental ways. The two have to be going on together all the time, as I have said. The governmental ways of God will not cease, but we are fitted to have our share in the more exalted form, in which the Father is working and the Son and Holy Spirit are operating as examples. All this is intended to impress us with the moral value, in the sight of God, of working.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIANITY (1)

Acts 1:1-14; Acts 1:21-26; Acts 2:1-4

AJG I was thinking of the place which the Holy Spirit has, or is intended to have, in Christianity, and also that what is to be noted at the beginning and is especially emphasised in the early chapters of the Acts is that it is a question also of the whole system being characterised by Jesus in heaven. It is Jesus who is to give character to the whole system but the power for it is in the Holy Spirit here. I think Mr. Raven used to say, an impressive statement, that man is in heaven and God is on earth. And that is the truth, that Man is in heaven in the Person of Jesus and God is on earth in the Spirit, and He is on earth in order to effectuate in divine power correspondence to what is in heaven. And hence this first chapter stresses the Holy Spirit, and also stresses that Jesus has been taken up into heaven. The expression "taken up" conveys the thought of "receiving up" that is it is expressive of the delight of heaven in having Jesus there. Four times the Holy Spirit is mentioned in chapter one and four times the taking up of Jesus into heaven is mentioned. And those two great facts, I believe, are to dominate our thoughts in regard of Christianity: that Man, according to God, is in heaven, and that involves the rejection of every other man, and the Holy Spirit is personally down here in order that testimony as to God, a continuation of what was found in Jesus in the days of His flesh, should be maintained in purity and in power, and also that the service of God (not that Acts develops that much), should be maintained in spiritual power. Perhaps I may remark also that Luke did not write this book, of course, until defection had well set in; that is,

Luke tells us at the end of his book that Paul was in Rome a prisoner so that he did not write the book until general departure from the truth had come in. But notwithstanding that he is not accepting any lowering of standard in his own mind, but by the Holy Spirit, is setting before us the true standard that obtained from the very start, and while of course we cannot look for any recovery to Pentecostal days as regards what is outward, it is the divine intention that we should have the divine standard before us, because God will never be content with anything less than the divine standard, and that where the truth is recovered, the recovery is to the original standard. Hence John in his first epistle insists all the way through on what was from the beginning, and really we not only get what was from the beginning in Jesus personally on earth but also in the assembly as set up at the outset.

HLH The first verse speaks of "all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach." Is it the thought then that those things should be continued in men?

AJG I understand that is the thought and the doing precedes the teaching, that is, the teaching was to be the exposition of what was set out in actual life, and hence the thirty years of the Lord, as to which comparatively little is given us, that long period of thirty years of private life preceding the three and a half years of public testimony. At the same time in the Acts Luke is not referring to that, because he takes as his standard what came out in the three and a half years of the Lord's public testimony; he starts at the baptism of John.

RS Is that the reason why, soon after the Lord entered on His public testimony. He began to select twelve men - so that His teaching would be continued?

AJG I think so. The assembly was in mind to be formed as a vessel in which all that came out in Jesus here is to be continued now in life. And the divine thought is that nothing that is out of keeping with what came out in Him is to be seen.

HAL The teaching continued for forty days after His resurrection, during which time He spoke of "the things which concern the kingdom of God." Would that not link on with His teaching before His death?

AJG I have no doubt it would, because we get His teaching as to the kingdom during the days of His flesh, but it is to be noted that while the assembly is in view - it says, "being assembled with them" - it does not say that He spoke to them of the assembly but taught them concerning the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God really involves subjective formation by the Spirit, because the kingdom of God is the moral sway of God in the soul by the Holy Spirit. And that is what is so important - formation by the Spirit of God, if the assembly is to be here according to God. But the first passage read brings in the prominent place the Holy Spirit is intended to have in Christianity in that it says that the Lord charged the apostles by the Holy Spirit, "Until that day in which, having by the Holy Spirit charged the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up," chapter 1: 2. And then He commands them not to depart from Jerusalem, "but to await the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye have heard of me," as though He would impress them with the fact that nothing was to be done in the way of testimony here without the Holy Spirit. They were to await the promise of the Father, and then He says, "For John indeed baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit after now not many days," which introduces immediately the thought of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, involving the assembly in which the saints are merged together, to move as one vessel, what is natural to us being submerged, and

put out of sight, in order that we might merge together in the fellowship and activity of the Holy Spirit.

LAC Luke closes his gospel with the saints being found in Bethany, the Lord Jesus having been parted from them and carried up into heaven in an attitude of blessing, and then going into Jerusalem in testimony. Do we find in Acts the carrying through of every thought that is thus expressed: the sustaining of the saints in the Lord's blessing, and maintaining them both in the sphere which would speak of Bethany as well as in the public position as in Jerusalem?

AJG I think Bethany perhaps has some allusion to what was vital in Judaism. You get no mention of Bethany in the Acts, rather the upper room, and then Jerusalem as near to it, because what is stressed in the Acts is that there is to be testimony, and Jerusalem is first of all the sphere of testimony, the sphere of hostility but the sphere of testimony, but it is to be in the power of what is known in the mount of Olives. They come from the mount of Olives, and come to the upper room which is in Jerusalem, that is it is a position that is morally above the level of what is around us, sustained by what we have in the Spirit, which the mount of Olives suggests, but yet having testimony in mind.

HOE Would the possession of the Holy Spirit by ourselves now correspond to the Lord's charging them by the Holy Spirit before He went on high?

AJG His charging *by* the Holy Spirit was to emphasise that everything was to be done by the Spirit, that even the Lord Himself would take up that position of charging them by the Holy Spirit.

HOE And we would pay full attention to what the Spirit has to say now, as they did the Lord then?

AJG Yes, surely. It is very affecting to think of it, that God is down here, God dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit. Man is in heaven and God is on earth.

MSS At the beginning of the Lord's ministry in the early chapters of Luke, the place of the Holy Spirit is stressed, leaving the wilderness and coming out of it.

AJG You mean as characterising the Lord personally. Quite so.

RAE Would this charging them by the Holy Spirit be somewhat in line with the 14th, 15th and 16th of John, where the Lord, as about to leave, in His last words to His own, is emphasising what is going to follow in the greatness of the fact of the Spirit being on earth?

AJG Yes, I think so, it was only a few weeks before this that He had spoken to the disciples so fully about the Comforter, and all that would be fresh in their minds. The remarkable place the Comforter was to fill when the Lord had

gone, and also the remarkable statement, "It is profitable for you that *I* go away, for if I do not go away the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you," as though to say, You cannot afford to be without the knowledge of the Comforter, and all that His presence on earth means, would no doubt be in their memories.

LBl In connection with your statement of Man in heaven and God upon earth, would that not convey the thought of the possibility of men in testimony here according to the mind of God?

AJG Oh yes, indeed, that is what the Spirit is here for, that all that was seen in Jesus on earth is to be continued now in the vessel which the Spirit is forming, that is, the assembly. And there were the thirty years of private life of the Lord Jesus, not that Acts says much that bears on that, but there were those thirty years which ascended as fragrance to the Father, and of course His three and a half years did too. But there were the thirty years of private life which were specially for the pleasure of God and then the three and a half years of testimony, and all that is to be continued. But the Acts has specially in mind the testimony. Hence the Acts dwells on the whole period from the baptism of John till the time He was taken up.

GM Do you think that the testimony that was borne in heaven at his baptism would prove that the thirty years here were of pleasure to God?

AJG Yes, it would indeed. "In whom *I have found* my delight" - what God had found. But Acts does not deal so much with the thirty years but rather with the three and a half years of public life. So that the one who was chosen to be an apostle in the place of Judas was to be one who had assembled with them, as it says, "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," chapter 1: 22. It would seem that the Lord came in and went out among the disciples, and assembled with them, from the baptism of John till the time that He was taken up.

VB What is the difference between His being "taken up" and being "received up"?

AJG I do not think there is much difference. The note says that the word "taken" means receiving, only in an active sense. Later on, in the third chapter, we get, "Whom heaven indeed must receive," but that is a more passive word and has not quite the force of the word in this chapter, which is actually "taken up", but in the sense of "receiving." And therefore I think it is to convey the great pleasure that heaven had in receiving Him. So that He was taken up, and they beheld Him taken up. And not only that, but the angel says to them,

"This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven." He shall come in the same manner. There is to be no change throughout the whole period of His absence, but when He comes it will be in the same manner in which He was seen taken up, as though to impress them with the sense that throughout the whole period from the time He was taken up till the time of His coming again there was to be no change. The standard is to be maintained.

SW Would you say the "taking up" would be the action connected with His movements here and the receiving is when He arrived *there*?

AJG Well, there might be something in that. "A cloud received him out of their sight." So He was received out of their sight. Hence the "faith" period began. The angel says, "Why do ye stand looking into heaven?" It is a question now of faith - "God's dispensation which is in faith."

HLH It speaks of receiving power, "the Holy Spirit having come upon you." Is that confined to the apostles or is it true of all who have received the Spirit?

AJG It would be true of all; I think the intention is that the position is to be filled out in power. The Lord speaks of the Father having reserved the matter of times and seasons in His own authority, but He adds, "Ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you." I believe the question of power is very important, because we are surrounded with a great system of religious pretension which claims authority and would say that those who are not ordained have no authority to speak of divine things. But the authority we have is the power we have in the Spirit, that is what gives authority, the power that there is in the Spirit.

HLH And the authority is associated with the fact that He is a divine Person, is it not?

AJG Quite so.

AY This is the power, you would say, which all the great men in Christendom are unable to resist?

AJG Exactly. And that is what we have to be concerned about, while we are very conscious we are in a day of little power. At the same time there is in the presence of the Spirit that which is irresistible by men, and the greater the opposition the more need for that to come into evidence.

RS And the more pretension there is around, the more humble and cast upon God, cast upon the Holy Spirit too, those who seek to go on actively with God need to be.

AJG Yes, indeed, and another thing is that as we dwell on this great fact of the Holy Spirit being with us, there is a certain danger perhaps, for flesh is very subtle, of thinking that the Holy Spirit is going to attach Himself to us, and make something of us, but He is not. He is going to make everything of Christ, the One who was taken up into heaven, and the apostle who was chosen was to be one who would bear witness of His resurrection. The fact that God has raised up Jesus from among the dead is evidence that He has set aside every other man. He just raised up one Man from among the dead and let the rest remain in death, you might say, and that is the clearest evidence that He has set aside every other man, and the Holy Spirit is always faithful to that, and will make it good in our own souls, if we are subject to Him.

SP Would you say a little more about that one Man out of death? It is a very important word.

AJG Well, it says in verse 22, "One of these should be a witness with us of his resurrection." The resurrection of Jesus formed the great subject of testimony at the outset. And it says, "*This* Jesus has God raised up." And not only raised up from among the dead but exalted. *This* Jesus, the Man whom the world would not have. And the more we weigh it over the more we realise that the moral import of the resurrection of Christ from among the dead is that God has brought out of death the One whom He approved, and by so doing has exposed and rejected every other man. And that has to be made good in our own souls. For it means that along with the recognition of the presence of the Spirit there has to be wrought in us an increasing measure of dependence and self-judgment.

RS So that you would say that the resurrection of Jesus from among the dead, and the presence of the Holy Spirit here with the saints, are intimately connected?

AJG They are. And I believe that is what comes out in this first chapter before the Spirit actually comes. The chapter mentions the Holy Spirit four times, so we are to be impressed with a sense that the whole system is to be dominated by the presence of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God also speaks four times of the One who has been taken up into heaven, as though it is He who is to give character to the whole position in Christianity.

JHH Is that why immediately after the Lord says, "Ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you," He brings in the thought of witness? It says, "And ye shall be *my* witnesses."

AJG Yes, exactly.

SP You said just now that the Holy Spirit would speak of Christ at all times and not of ourselves. Say a little more on that.

AJG The Lord said of the Comforter in John 16, "He shall glorify *me*, for he shall receive of mine, and shall announce it to you." Then He says, "All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you." But the Spirit does not only speak of Christ. He glorifies Christ, but then there are the *things* of Christ, the *things* of the Spirit, the *things* that are above. There is a great range of things that the Holy Spirit will speak of, but He certainly will not make anything of ourselves, or in any way allow the bringing in of the first man.

MSS Would it be necessary for the Holy Spirit to speak of Himself sometimes?

AJG Yes, as under the direction of the Lord. The Lord said of the Comforter, "He shall not speak from himself, but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak." And therefore, if the Spirit is speaking about Himself, it is obviously because the Lord sees the need of it, and the Spirit speaks as under direction from the Lord; that is the wonderful place He has taken in the economy; that He has come down to the earth to be at the disposal of the Man whom God has set at His right hand.

AY Would you say the character of the service of the Spirit is to this end, to bring forward Christ at all times. I notice the great theme of the apostle's ministry amongst men was Christ and the resurrection.

AJG Well, quite so. And then of course when it is a question of the Spirit speaking to the saints He speaks in relation to Christ and the assembly. That is there are the *things* of Christ, and the things of the Spirit, and the things that are above. So that we do not want to be rigid in our thoughts and say that the Spirit will speak only of Christ personally, because that is not right. He speaks of the things of Christ, and then, "All things that the Father has are mine." So there are the Father's things: "All the treasure of his master was under his hand," it says of the servant in Genesis 24.

CB Would the features of Christ Himself be set forth in His witnesses, not only what they say, but certain features exemplified in them?

AJG No doubt that is so. We see that in the Acts, in chapter 4 it says of Peter and John, "they recognised them that they were with Jesus," and then we see the same thing of course with Stephen very manifestly. So it is clear that one thing the Spirit has in mind is that the testimony should be accredited by those who have part in it.

MSS Is there any significance in the word "assembled" being used in verse 4? "Being assembled with them."

AJG And we get it again in verse 21. So it is clear that the Lord had the thought of the assembly before Him from the very outset. It says, "It is necessary therefore, 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." And then that verse you referred to, verse 4, refers to the forty days, "being assembled with them commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem." So from the beginning of His ministry, the Lord was putting the idea of assembling into the minds of those who were companying with Him.

MSS That characterises the day in which Christianity was inaugurated here, would you say?

AJG Yes, exactly, the assembly is the great vessel that God has in mind. This is a unique period, this two thousand years. It says, that prophets who prophesied, inquired what time it was that they were speaking of, and it was revealed to them that it was to us and not to themselves. And it says that angels desire to look into it. So all that is told us to impress us with the special importance, the uniqueness, of this period during which the assembly is being formed.

RS His being assembled with them - do you think it would suggest that He was teaching them to assemble?

AJG I think so. As to what He taught them we do not know, but He was accustoming them to the idea of assembling, and no doubt He would tell them how to assemble.

MSS Would the teaching in verse 3 give character to that? Would it have assembling in view?

AJG I think it has, because the kingdom of God which has in mind moral formation in us by the Spirit is very necessary if we are to learn to assemble. The kingdom of God involves that we become subjugated.

RS So many different individuals with so many different temperaments would need the sphere of the kingdom to subdue each individually, would you say?

AJG Exactly. There is to be that work of subjugation and control, and then the persons thus subdued become merged in the power of the Spirit into one entity.

AT Would the baptism of John be a landmark approved of God?

AJG Oh, well it would. Beginning from the baptism of John. The baptism of John was the beginning of the Lord's public testimony. That is why it is brought in here. Of course it has a moral bearing upon ourselves because the baptism of John was a baptism of repentance involving the acceptance on the part of those who were subject to it of the setting aside really of the first man. And morally that was what was involved.

RS Does it include the axe laid to the root of the tree?

AJG To the root of the tree. Exactly. That is a thing, I suppose, you never find in nature, do you? The axe applied to the *root* of the tree. It may go fairly low down on the trunk, but you do not get it applied to the root of the tree. But God goes to the root of matters.

RAE Is that what you meant when you said earlier that the Spirit of God does not attach Himself to us?

AJG Exactly, the flesh is very subtle, and I think if we analyse our thoughts, we sometimes will find that while we would not say it in so many words, that is what is in our minds, that the Spirit is going to attach Himself to us, and give *us* certain ability and so on. But really the Spirit in His faithfulness is going to set aside anything of self-confidence or anything of that sort, so that the power may be only of God.

RAE Would you say that in 1 Corinthians 1, the apostle is really laying the axe to the root of the tree, so that we might have the Spirit in chapter 2?

AJG Yes, quite so.

WH The first man must go completely?

AJG Well, we all accept that as truth, but the Spirit is here to make it good in us, and that is why it is important for us to study the features of Jesus, the One who has been taken up. We may come to that a little later on in our readings, but one might notice just now that when Peter speaks on the day of Pentecost he quotes in full the last four verses of Psalm 16. He calls attention to that Psalm, and that Psalm delineates the features of Jesus, the Man who has been taken up. So that it is well for us to study the features of the One who has been taken up into heaven, for that is to give character to the assembly.

WH That is why it says, "This Jesus" several times in this chapter and chapter 2.

AJG *This* Jesus. Exactly. They all knew what Jesus had been. The disciples, at any rate, did.

VB In connection with what you said about the Spirit not making anything of us, do you think it would be worked out in 2 Corinthians 4, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not from us?"

AJG Yes, indeed, that is a matter to be faced by any who wish to serve, and it is right that all should wish to serve, for there is something for everybody to do. At the same time if any wish to serve they should be prepared to face that, that there are certain moral conditions that God looks for, and certain exercises will be brought in in order to bring about those conditions. That is pre-eminently so with Paul for God rolled in death upon him so that He despaired even of life, so that he should not trust in himself.

MSS Does that involve the truth of circumcision as Paul speaks of it?

AJG Yes, that is so.

LAC Do we not assemble in the light of the fact that the first man has been removed, and as thus assembled the Spirit of God, whose authority is recognised should then govern our movements in assembly, and also maintain us in the light of the removal of the first man?

AJG I am sure of that. The Spirit is always true to Christ and His death. The two go together.

EM-s Is that connected with verse 3, "presented himself living after he had suffered, with many proofs"?

AJG Yes. He presented Himself living during the forty days; I believe that is to impress them, as another has said, with the idea of spirituality, and also with the idea that spiritual things are substantial. You see, the Lord moved about amongst them for forty days but the world never saw Him during that time. It was a spiritual condition that had now come in. And we are to become accustomed to spiritual conditions, the Spirit having come, and yet we are to realise that they are real and substantial. I do not mean to say that they are visible, but I think the Lord is seeking to help us, not merely to hold things in faith, but to be conscious of the reality of things in the Spirit.

FC Would you open up the last part of verse 5 on the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

AJG Well, it says in 1 Corinthians 12, "in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit." I think it is the way that the saints, of different temperaments and different measures of natural ability and all that kind of thing, are all enabled to merge together in one vessel,

having the same thoughts and the same feelings and so on. It is the power of the Spirit only that can do it. God Himself, in the Spirit, effects this. It says, "Whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free." The Jew would be the religious man, the Greek would be the learned man, and the bond or free would refer to differences in social status. All these things may be said to be in persons constituting the assembly, but as the Holy Spirit is recognised, all these things go out of sight. Natural distinctions disappear, and one vessel characterised by divine power, and the liberty and intelligence that the Spirit gives, is seen.

MSS Would the fact that the baptism of John is mentioned just before it suggest the fact that there is a certain moral state which must precede the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so. It will be found that both Peter and Paul, in the 10th and 13th chapters of the Acts, bring in the baptism of John, as though they recognise it as a necessary moral basis.

RS So that when Paul went to Ephesus and found twelve men there, who had received the testimony and ministry of John's baptism, he just took them on from that point.

AJG Yes, he recognised that the foundation was there, but what was needed now was the Holy Spirit, and their knowledge of having the Holy Spirit.

SW Is one viewed as in the kingdom without having the Spirit?

AJG No, I do not think so, not the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is referred to in Matthew's gospel as covering the public position in what we call Christendom, that is, all that publicly acknowledges Jesus as Lord, whether it is vital or not. Christianity talks about the year of our Lord, so that there is a public recognition of Jesus as Lord, although, alas, very many are not in it vitally. And the kingdom of heaven refers to that I think. But the kingdom of God, as a rule at any rate in Scripture, is the vital thing; it is those who are under the sway of the Holy Spirit.

RS So that Matthew that gives the kingdom of heaven, tells us of ten virgins - five wise and five foolish.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AY Romans in speaking of the kingdom of God says it is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

AJG Yes, exactly.

HAL Is there any importance attached to the fact that one was selected to complete the number of the apostles before the Holy Spirit came?

AJG I suppose it was necessary that there should be the complete number of the apostles before the Holy Spirit came. And it is remarkable that Peter moved in extraordinary intelligence even before the Spirit came, referring to the scripture in the Psalms and bringing it forward that it was necessary that another should be appointed because the Psalm says, "Let another take his overseership." But the matter of times and seasons is important because the Lord said, "It is not yours to know times or seasons,

which the Father has placed in his own authority, but ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you." So that the position is that we are left to go on in the testimony, meaning that it is a question of patience and of faith. The Lord Himself takes the ground of the Son not knowing the day or the hour, the Father having reserved this in His own authority. So that it means that we are left to go on in patience. The Lord speaks of the word of *His* patience, as though He maintains that attitude.

MSS Would you say we are witnesses of the crucified Christ, referred to, the world not having seen Him during the forty days.

AJG We are witnesses to the fact that the crucified Christ is exalted in heaven. I think that is the subject of testimony, that He is exalted in heaven. It means that we are to be identified with the One who was crucified, but the subject of testimony is that He is exalted in heaven.

EM-e Is that the kind of preaching that Paul preached at Athens - Jesus and the resurrection?

AJG Well, we do not know how far he went, of course, but he certainly went as far as the resurrection. But he also announced that he was ordained to judge. It is at Athens he says that God has "appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." So that there is a great deal in the resurrection of Jesus - God is marking out that Man, as the One to be in supreme exaltation and authority and the One to judge. All that is involved in the fact that God has raised up Jesus from among the dead.

HLH Occupation with times and seasons would tend to lower the tone of testimony would it not? It is the Lord's return, really, that marks the termination of this period of testimony. It begins from the time He was taken up until the time He returns.

AJG And we are just to go on in patience, not knowing exactly. No doubt the Spirit will give an inkling as to when the Lord's coming is near, and I think He has begun to work with the saints already in that connection. But at the same time our outlook is just to go on. The Lord says with regard to those who have been entrusted with feeding the saints, "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." And in regard of all He says this, "Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching," Luke 12: 43, 37.

HLH I was suggesting that it would give a tone of urgency to the testimony, would it not? The fact that the Lord's return is uncertain.

AJG Quite so. Therefore we cannot say that we have another year. The question is that we only have today really.

ELE The Lord Himself takes up the ground of not knowing, is it not very lowly and humble of Him?

AJG Quite so.

ELE Do you think the Revelation supposes that the Father made known to Him at a later date? It says, "Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him." There seems to be something in the opening up of the day that is coming.

AJG But perhaps not the hour exactly, not the precise day or hour.

RS But a statement like that, the Lord saying that the Father has reserved that in His own power and He not knowing - is not a statement like that to emphasise the perfection of His manhood?

AJG I think so. It is a question as to whether we can really comprehend it, but we just accept it. There it is.

HAL The tribulation and kingdom and patience are linked together, and patience would take account of that fact, that he is waiting? *He* also is waiting.

AJG Yes, I think so, because He speaks of, "Because thou hast kept the word of *my* patience." As though throughout the whole period of waiting and the Lord's patience He is speaking, and will continue to speak and we are to be marked by keeping the word of His patience.

RS Is it not the case that others are getting blessing in the gospel during the time of patience and serving?

AJG Yes indeed, and do you not think that God intends that every thought regarding the assembly should find an answer among the saints before the Lord comes? It may be only in a few but He intends that there should be an answer in the assembly to every thought of His.

RS I believe that.

ELE He will credit it to all - the whole assembly.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AY You said something a little while ago about the upper room, but have you got anything to say about the *city* (verse 13)? "And when they were come into the city they went up to the upper chamber."

AJG I think it is to be noticed that they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called the mount of Olives. It is near Jerusalem. And when they were come into the city they went up to the upper chamber. So that the position of the saints as in the city, that is in the world where Christ has been crucified, is that they are placed in it by God for the testimony's sake, but they are not to be of it. So that their interests of life are in the upper room, which is in the city but above the level of what is going on around. And then the secret of their power is the mount of Olives. The mount of Olives is a mountain, that is it is on the earth, and yet it is an elevation, above the level of the earth; and a place that you can resort to. It is really the resource we have in the Spirit, we can withdraw into the realm of the Spirit. So the Lord always resorted to the mount of Olives.

AY I was thinking of that, immediately after the Supper, it says, "And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the mount of Olives."

AJG Yes, quite so.

AY I wonder if it would be suggested in that that the position must be maintained in the light of the mount of Olives?

AJG Yes, and it is from the mount of Olives that they come into the city. The Lord set the example as we get in the end of 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." And then in the morning He returned to the temple. As though that was His manner of life in connection with His testimony, that in the day time He was amongst men and in the night time He withdrew to the mount of Olives.

SP Would you say that is the sphere of the Spirit to which the saints would resort?

AJG The mount of Olives is the sphere of the Spirit. It is a question of availing ourselves, through exercise, of what we have in the Holy Spirit. So that we are renewed, as it says, "renewed day by day."

HLH So it is a suggestion that while the Lord had gone on high and they would miss Him, yet they had a resource in the Spirit typically that they could draw from.

AJG Exactly; and they were to draw from it too, so they come into the city from there.

HLH It is significant in that way that it is the first thing mentioned after they moved into the faith system. The Lord had gone out of sight.

AJG Yes. It is essential.

LAC Would the upper room suggest to our minds a place of resort and would it bear a different character from the thought of the mount of Olives?

AJG I think the upper room would be more what we find amongst the saints, so that we find our own company. And our life and interests are heavenly, they are not characterised by the things of the world. So in connection with the upper room it says, there were Peter and John and James and so on; "these gave themselves all with one accord to continual prayer, with several women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren," so they were all present, and then it speaks of a crowd of names; each one has a name, so it is the saints in their personality and dignity. Our names are written in heaven.

HOE Are the city and the mount of Olives then individual, and the upper room collective? I do not mean that it is only individual, but you were alluding to the Lord in the day in the city, and in the night in the mount of Olives, does that all connect with our individual position now, that we find ourselves amongst the brethren in the upper room?

AJG I think the city is the place of testimony and therefore it would be both individual and collective. I mean every day we are in the place of testimony, and that is individual in one sense, but then also we are in the testimony collectively as in principle, the assembly of God in Bridgetown, and as committed to the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

HOE The upper room is in the city then?

AJG The upper room is *in* the city, but not characteristically *of* it.

MSS The assembling of the Lord with them as you said is spiritually connected more with the upper room than with the mount of Olives?

AJG Yes, I think that would be right.

MSS I am thinking of 1 Corinthians and the way assembling is spoken of there.

AJG Although, of course, we cannot divide them in too hard and fast a way, because when we are assembled we want to know what the gain of the mount of Olives is, what there is in the Holy Spirit.

BA We sometimes sing, "With Thee we rise on high"; would that enter into it?

AJG Well, that is possible in the Spirit. But now - we read the first four verses in chapter 2, and one was specially thinking of, "there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing and filled all the house where they were sitting." That is, the divine thought as set out at the outset was that the Spirit should *fill* the whole position, the whole assembly.

ELE Is it like Moses of whom we read that he could not go into the tabernacle for the glory of the Lord filled it. God took it on Himself.

AJG Quite so. As regards ourselves we are made suitable for the presence of God, and we ought to be equal to it. But the thought is, I think, that the Spirit of God intends to fill us so that there should not be any room for anything else.

ELE Quite so, nothing of the flesh then.

AJG No, quite so.

RS So far as we are concerned you would say we are privileged to live in the day when redemption has already been accomplished.

AJG That is it. So that we are made suitable for the presence of God, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

HAL Is that why it says, "and it sat upon each one of them? The thought of complacency?

AJG It is very significant that it says, the Spirit "filled all the house where they were sitting,"

but it says also that He sat upon each one of them, as though each one is to come under the sense of the presence of the Spirit.

ELE Immediately they "began to speak" - they spoke.

AJG Yes, it is speaking that is in mind here.

RAE Would the filling of the house involve that there is what is needed for anything that might arise?

AJG I believe that is right, that is developed in 1 Corinthians 12, where what the Spirit is and the variety of His operations are enlarged upon, as it says, "For to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom, and to another the

word of knowledge, ...to another prophecy," and so on. So that whatever the occasion requires is there in the Spirit. The Spirit does not make everything of one brother, but all is there in the assembly. Whatever is required is there in the Spirit.

ELE Hence the necessity of waiting and recognising what the Spirit may do.

AJG Yes, quite so.

RS So the more we learn to recognise the Spirit the more we would learn to make room for one another?

AJG Exactly. It is not a question of one brother thinking that he has been given a place of leadership and must do everything, for that is not the Spirit's mind. A brother may have a place of leadership, and if he has, he is responsible to do so with diligence, according to Romans 12, but it is not the Spirit's way to make everything of one brother. To one is given one thing, to another is given another thing.

HN So that in 1 Corinthians 12: 7, it says, "To each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit."

AJG It is for the good of the whole, and it has impressed one lately that each one of us carries about with him in his own body a witness to what God has in mind in the assembly, for the human body is a wonderful witness to the working of love. All the members in the body work unselfishly for the good of the whole, and if it is in a healthy condition every member is functioning. And many members are entirely unseen, and never are seen, and yet they continue functioning, although they never get any recognition maybe. It is a remarkable picture of love working in the assembly.

LBl As to those members that are not seen, would Joseph and Matthias come in here as available for what was required?

AJG Yes, they are available, and the Lord exercises sovereign choice and He chooses Matthias. We get the impression that possibly the other apostles thought that Joseph called Barsabas was the better of the two, because he is mentioned first, and called Barsabas, and had been surnamed Justus, there is quite a lot said about him, but then the Lord comes in and selects Matthias, and they accept it without any difficulty.

MSS Would "they were all together in one place" link with what you refer to about the body? It leads to unity, I mean, if the Spirit has liberty?

AJG Well, yes, I think it only states the fact that they were all together in one place, but there is great need to be together in affection: that is what the

Spirit of God is labouring for.

HAL This emphasises the house, does it not? And that is the first thing we come to, the thought of the house rather than the body.

AJG Yes, quite so. So the body is more an underlying thought. It seems to me the truth of the body underlies every aspect in which the assembly is viewed.

LAC You remarked very helpfully that the Spirit of God is always seen faithful to Christ and His death. Would the mention here in verse 3 of the fire and of the parted tongues, bear out your remark?

AJG Yes, I think the fact that He appeared as tongues shows that what was in mind was that there was to be speaking in testimony, but then He came upon them as fire, obviously involving that there is that which has to be kept under, set aside. That is, the Spirit is not going to make any room for the flesh, and hence He comes in in that character of fire.

AY Have you got anything in mind as to verse 4, "And began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth."

AJG The Spirit gave them that power. The Spirit for the moment was setting aside what came in at the tower of Babel.

WT The Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord as a dove - quite a contrast to the parted tongues of fire.

AJG It is important to keep the contrast in mind. There was nothing in the Lord to disturb the holy sensitiveness which the dove would suggest, but the fire would suggest power for the setting aside of all that was unsuitable to God. According to Leviticus 23 two wave loaves baken with leaven were presented to God. Those who are not free from sin actually can still be presented to God because the fire has done its work, that is sin in the flesh is rendered inactive by the power of the Holy Spirit.

RS That is very helpful.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIANITY (2)

Acts 2: 22 - 36; Acts 4: 32 - 37; Acts 5: 1 - 20

AJG What is in mind in reading certain passages from the Acts is to seek to get impressions of Christianity as it was set up at the outset, involving the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly. That is, one might say, the dominating feature of the dispensation, that God Himself is here in the Spirit, but it also involves, as we remarked yesterday afternoon, that the whole position is to be characterised by the fact that Man in the Person of Jesus is in heaven. And the intention is that what was seen in Jesus, the things which He began both to do and to teach, should be now seen in the assembly here. That can easily be understood, for God's thought is that He would dwell among men, as it is said, an habitation of God in the Spirit; that is what the assembly is at the present time, and if God is to dwell among men, it must be in conditions that are congenial to Him, it must be in men of the kind that He approves. Hence we noticed yesterday afternoon that the first chapter of the Acts has many references to Jesus as having been "taken up into heaven," four references to His "taking up" and four references to the Holy Spirit. And here in this opening address of Peter's after the Spirit had come, the whole burden of his address is, "This Jesus." "Jesus, the Nazaraean," in verse 22, and then "This Jesus," verse 32, "has God raised up," and then again in verse 36, "God has made him, *this* Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." So that Christianity was established in the light of a Man of whom God has approved, who has been cast out by the world and crucified, but raised from the dead and exalted by God. And then as it says in verse 33, "Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which ye behold and hear." That is, the Spirit has not come independently of Christ, but as given to Christ in exaltation by the Father for men, and poured out by Him. In Psalm 68: 18, it says, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts in Man, and even for the rebellious, for the dwelling there of Jah Elohim." I thought perhaps we might dwell a little to start with on that great fact, and then in the other passages we have read, see how the testimony as established on earth met with opposition, as we might expect, it taking the form of threatening in chapter 4, and how that was met, and how opposition only served to bind the saints more closely together. And then how the enemy seeks subtly to counteract what is of God by the introduction of evil, and how fully that was met, chapter 5 serving to bring into prominence how the Spirit of God is spoken of - the Holy Spirit, God, and the Spirit of the Lord. And then further, how the result of all that is an increase of

holiness among the people, and complete oneness of accord with regard to the dealing with evil, holiness among the people being built up, so that "Of the rest," it says, "durst no man join them." So we have in principle the great and high wall of the heavenly city in what is built up in the souls of the saints. And then finally, we have also the first mention, I think, in the Acts, of angelic service, and the word to the apostles, to go and stand and speak in the temple to the people, "all the words of *this* life," emphasising that it is life that God intends should be in evidence as His great testimony. There is the word of life in the Lord in the days of His flesh, but now it is life in the saints that is to be the great testimony.

AAT Is it not the case that in the early history of the assembly, while the work of God was going on in the saints, and the assembly was being formed, yet they had to wait for Paul's ministry to understand that was going on?

AJG Very largely, I think. Certainly they had to wait for Paul's ministry before the heavenly side of the truth came out, only I think what is seen is that in the power of the Holy Spirit the thing was there vitally before the truth as to it really came out, which is usually God's way. He usually brings in a thing vitally before He gives the truth to explain what it is He has brought in. So, for example, with Nicodemus. There is no doubt that he was born anew, he is distinguished from those whom the Lord would not trust Himself to because He knew what was in man, but it says, "*But* there was a man," and he came to Jesus by night, and then the Lord speaks to him about new birth. There was no doubt that Nicodemus was already born anew, but he did not know it, and the Lord was really explaining to him what had come about in himself.

MSS Would the thought of life be stressed in this address of Peter's? Earlier in the passage read yesterday the Lord presents Himself living.

AJG The thought of life is indeed stressed, that is, the moral features of life as seen in Jesus, so that we ought to have in our minds Psalm 16 which the Spirit of Christ indited to describe the features of moral excellence of the Lord Jesus as Man here, culminating with His facing death with perfect confidence in God and saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, nor wilt thou give thy gracious One to see corruption, thou wilt make known to me the path of life: thy countenance is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Peter quotes the last four verses of that Psalm in order to point out that it is such an One as that whom God has exalted by His right hand.

AAT I think you wanted to call attention to *this* Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth.

AJG Well, the people in Jerusalem would know well what kind of man He was, and certainly the disciples of Christ would know well what kind of man He was.

It is *this* Jesus, crucified by the world as the expression of their contempt of that kind of man, but exalted by God's right hand as the evidence that He is the Man in whom He delights. But now the saints are a habitation of God in the Spirit. It must be formed after that Man. He is the pattern of the order of manhood to which God can commit Himself.

HEB You have in mind that the Spirit is the power for that formation?

AJG Yes, the Spirit has in mind to bring about that formation in the saints, because it is a question of providing a dwelling for God. That is apparently the first light in which the assembly is viewed, as the house of God; but what kind of habitation does God require? The Spirit came upon Jesus in bodily form as a dove and abode upon Him, but now it is God's thought to have a habitation among men, and to have it there as a testimony among men.

HEB One feature of the Spirit's activities is to call attention to *this* Jesus, you were saying.

AJG Yes, quite so. God gave Him the Holy Spirit in exaltation. It says, "Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured out this which ye behold and hear." So that the Spirit has come upon men from Jesus glorified.

BB *This* Jesus is because of the dispensation of grace?

AJG I think it is stressing the Man. It is a dispensation of grace of course, but I think it is stressing *the Man*, what kind of man He was. So Paul in going to Corinth, where the truth of the assembly locally was to be established, says he determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is he went there with the pattern in his mind and he was determined to lay a good foundation. That is he would bring in *the Man* Jesus Christ, then he brought in the cross as the power by which God sets aside every other man in the souls of believers.

AAT And the Nazaraean was emphasised?

AJG Yes, quite so. It is remarkable how the apostles in their early testimony were careful to emphasise that, that He was the Nazaraean and that He had been crucified, so that believers had to come into the position of identification with a crucified Man. They had to understand that they were committing themselves to a position of outward reproach.

WH It says, "A man borne witness to by God," in the twenty-second verse. A Person out of death in resurrection power.

AJG He was borne witness to by God by works of power and wonders and signs, but then He is additionally borne witness to by the testimony of the Spirit through the apostles in the fact that God has raised Him from the dead. That was the expression by God of His approval of Jesus and His rejection of every other man. He raised Him from among the dead. It was a selective resurrection.

JJ In this way He is brought prominently before us?

AJG Quite so, at the very outset of Christianity.

CM Is this a factor of His personality?

AJG It points especially to the moral excellence of His manhood. Hence Psalm 16 is so important, and to appreciate the various features of moral excellence that that Psalm speaks of, because that really is the foundation of the assembly as regards the order of manhood of which it is to be composed.

HLH Is it not significant that in Psalm 16, in the early part of it, reference is made to the saints that are on the earth, the excellent of the earth. Does it not suggest that the features delineated in that Psalm in regard to Jesus are to be perpetuated in the saints?

AJG I think it would.

RAE Would the fact then that the Lord Jesus received the Spirit as Man and then pours it out be to impress us with the cardinal fact in Christianity that He is the administrator of everything?

AJG Yes, I would think so, and also that the Spirit comes in in order to bring about conformity to Him in those upon whom the Spirit has come. The Spirit's testimony, as I think we remarked yesterday, is always faithful to Christ as the One whom God has approved - *the* Christ. There are many antichrists but there is only one Christ. And the Spirit is also faithful to the fact that He has reached His place of exaltation by way of death, involving the setting aside of every other man. The assembly is formed on that testimony, and therefore it is to enter into our souls as a kind of spiritual fibre.

AC If we are identified with this kind of Man it will necessitate suffering?

AJG Yes, quite so.

VB Would you say in verse 36 that there is additional testimony to what God has done to Christ, made Him both Lord and Christ?

AJG Yes, the apostle brings in "Lord" first because subjection is required. It is the obedience of faith that is called for in the gospel. So that subjection is

required before there can be any coming into the gain of what He is as "Christ." Hence lordship is placed first.

AY You were stressing the point of the Man just now. Would you say it is the Spirit's work now to bring out in the saints the features of that Man who was so pleasing to God, that these very features might mark the saints now?

AJG Yes, the things that Jesus began both to *do* and to teach, obviously implying that there was to be a continuance of them. We get a striking word is Isaiah 57, it says, "For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble..." and so on. That is the kind of person whom He whose name is Holy would dwell with.

AAT Another scripture saith, "Holy, ...undefiled, separated from sinners."

AJG Such an High Priest, it says, becomes us. It shows how great the saints are, that such an High Priest is required by them.

CB And would you say that the opposition is against those features which appeared in the Lord Jesus Christ being continued in the saints?

AJG I would indeed say that. The initial testimony was that it was the One whom the world had crucified that God had exalted, and hence believers need not expect to find any acceptance in the world. If we find acceptance in the world, it is just a little challenge to us as to whether we are wholly faithful. Of course I know that there is a certain light in which believers are acceptable, as showing the features of God in goodness and compassion and so on, so that it says in chapter 5, "the people magnified them" (verse 13), so that there is a certain aspect in which saints come into favour with men simply because they do good. But on the other hand if they maintain the features of the Man whom the world has rejected, they will find themselves more in disfavour than in favour.

RS The gospel preached is in view of believers confessing the name of the Lord and coming into Christian fellowship, with an understanding that they are coming into that which stands in reproach so far as the world is concerned?

AJG Yes, but on the other hand the position of the assembly as the house of God is a very privileged one, because it is the pillar and base of the truth, as Paul says. The assembly, composed of saints indwelt by the Spirit, stands out prominently as a pillar, as a testimony to the truth of what God is.

SC So verse 36, would you say, is the present position in which the Lord stands now?

AJG Yes, it is. He is Lord and Christ.

HOE You were saying that the particular point of attack of the enemy is the taking on of the features of Christ in the saints... I was wondering whether Mary of Bethany was not an example of that in the twelfth of John? The enemy was near with his suggestion as to waste when she lavished her affection on Christ and made much of Him.

AJG Yes, she was really entirely in accord with God, for she distinguished Christ, and that is really what the title Christ means, that He is the One whom God has anointed, distinguished. And there is only one Christ, and that necessarily means the setting aside of every other, and that is what David's brethren had to learn: that Eliab had to be rejected, and Abinadab and Shammah, and all the other four, the brethren of David, and then David is anointed. And they had to learn that, and when they had learnt this they could come in, for it says, "David was anointed in the midst of his brethren." They had to be rejected, you might say, as men, but they could come in as his brethren once they accepted David.

HAL In Matthew 16, the Lord refers to His building, "I will build my assembly." Is this now the answer to that?

AJG Yes, quite so. That has in mind that the assembly should stand here in the presence of the opposition. It says, "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it," and the Rock on which He builds is just what is in the souls of the saints, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

LBl Would you say then that the contrite and humble spirit in Isaiah 57, that you referred to, would remind us that we need to make room for the Holy Spirit?

AJG Well, I think the presence of the Holy Spirit requires it. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, and what becomes us, with God dwelling in us? Think of who God is, and what we are as His creatures, and yet He is pleased to take up His abode in the body of each believer, as well as in the assembly as a vessel, and what kind of spirit becomes us in the light of that?

LBl Would you say that the truth of what was referred to in Isaiah 57, the humble and contrite spirit, is essential that the Holy Spirit may preserve us for His service?

AJG I am sure it is. I think we have only to think of it for a moment to realise that if God Himself takes up His abode in us that is the kind of spirit that becomes us. But in addition to that it has been set out in Jesus, that is what makes the truth so powerful, that One of the Godhead should become Man

and set out in manhood the kind of Man that God could take pleasure in and dwell with.

AY You were speaking just now of the assembly and hades' gates, would that involve conflict, but the Holy Spirit is the power to carry the matter through right on to the end for God's pleasure?

AJG Yes, quite so. There is no creature, I suppose, so powerful or so able, in a wicked sense, than Satan, but God Himself has taken up the conflict by coming in in the Holy Spirit, and then the Lord is on high too, so that there is a double range, you might say, of divine power against Satan, the Lord on high and the Spirit here.

HAL You referred to Nicodemus coming to the Lord. Would you say that He would not commit Himself to men, but God Himself has committed Himself to us in the gift of the Holy Spirit?

AJG Quite so. But that is because we have committed ourselves to Christ. The Spirit is not going to attach anything to the flesh. I think it is important to keep that in mind, the Lord is stressing this thought of the Holy Spirit and all that He is to us, but He has not come in to make anything of us or to attach to the flesh in any sense. God gives us the Holy Spirit because we have committed ourselves to Christ.

RS So that we are not even taught that we are born anew until we have received Christ.

AJG No, quite so.

RS The thing would be there, but to get everything clear it is of necessity that we come to Christ.

AJG Exactly, and they that have the Spirit, are made to feel that anything that we have or are as believers, is entirely the result of the work of God. God has had to begin entirely anew.

SC Would you say that verse 32, speaking of the apostles, comes down to our day through them? "Whereof all we are witnesses."

AJG Well, we may and should be witnesses, but that verse is particularly apostolic. The apostles had a distinctive place in the testimony, according to what the Lord said at the end of chapter 15 of the gospel of John, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father. He shall bear witness concerning me; and *ye* too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning."

DLE Do we view the gift of the Holy Spirit as a blessing not understood by the world?

AJG It certainly is that, the Lord said of the Comforter, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him." There is no affinity at all between the world and the Spirit, so that every believer really is a mystery and is intended to be so. There is the element of mystery belonging to Christianity which lies in the fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and every believer really is mysterious.

AAT You mean to the world?

AJG Yes, quite so.

DLE I was thinking of the poor woman that Elisha told to pour out the oil.

AJG That incident is brought in to show us how we are to avail ourselves of the Spirit, first as enabling us to fulfil every righteous obligation, and then as having that by which we may live. "Live thou and thy sons on the rest."

LAC Would you say a word further as to what you mentioned earlier as to Christ having received the promise of the Father, and then having Himself poured it out. It seems to be of the greatest importance to understand the reason for the Spirit to have been given in that way.

AJG I think it is connected with Psalm 68 because it is evidently an allusion to that. God's thought was to dwell with men; it says in verse 18 of Psalm 68, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts in man, and even for the rebellious, for the dwelling there of Jah Elohim." It was "in man," or "as man," that is, in connection with mankind; so that it was God's thought to dwell with men, but it is men of Christ's order that He is going to dwell with.

So that He raises from the dead the Man whom He approved and then gives *Him* the Holy Spirit to be shed forth upon men.

EB That is why it says, "God hath made him both Lord and Christ "? It is necessary for us to come under His lordship?

AJG Yes, indeed.

LAC Does that also throw great light on the relative positions which divine Persons have taken up?

AJG I think it does. It stresses the relatively subordinate places which the Lord and the Spirit have taken, that the Lord has come in as Man and has been set in that place of administration, and then the Spirit is received by Him

from the Father and sent forth by Him. So that there is no independent action of the Persons of the Godhead.

SW Now if the blessed Lord as the exalted Man is given the Spirit, would you help us then as to the kind of service He renders as the ascended Man?

AJG As the ascended Man in contrast to the exalted Man, you mean? I do not know that there is much in that. The view of Christ as the exalted Man is that God has exalted Him, it is what God has done. The ascended Man rather stresses His own victory and His right to go up far above all heavens.

EB I was wondering if "these words" in chapter 2: 22, could be viewed in any way as connected with "the words of this life" in chapter 5.

AJG In chapter 2 Peter is calling attention to Jesus as approved of God among them by wonders and signs, as they themselves knew, crucified by men, but raised by God, but when we come to chapter 5, there is the angel who tells the apostles to refer to "this life"; the testimony begins by drawing attention to "this Jesus"; but now there is something that corresponds with Jesus in the saints that could be called "this life." The word of life was set out in Jesus according to the first epistle of John. But now "this life" which it speaks of is what is continued in the saints, and can be called attention to.

RS Is it the same thing as, "which thing is true in him and in you"?

AJG I was thinking of that, so the life now is seen in the saints.

MC It is said of Peter that he could say, "Look on us."

AJG Exactly. They were two outstanding men that could be called attention to, but then the testimony had spread and taken form the more by the time we come to chapter 5, so that they are not told then to call attention to themselves, but to call attention to "this life," which I take it is what could be seen among any of the believers in Jerusalem.

HLH This address of Peter's was intended to give light as to what really had taken place in the presence of the Holy Spirit there, it says, "That which ye now see and hear." Something was existing and he referred to scriptures in order to give light as to it.

AJG Exactly.

HLH And so he does not only quote Psalm 16, but interprets it, as it were.

AJG Yes.

EMe In verse 37, it says, "and having heard *this* they were pricked in heart." Does that show that the testimony was effective?

AJG It does indeed. But then as the book proceeds we find that there is of course opposition and in chapter 4, Peter and John are apprehended. We get in the early chapters of the Acts the verification of what the Lord said to them earlier that when they were brought before different persons or authorities that they were not to think beforehand what they would say, for the Spirit Himself would speak. So in verse 8 of chapter 4, it says, "Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them," and we get what is similar continually, but verse 21 says that they were threatened, "they, having further threatened them, let them go," and then, "having been let go," verse 23, "they came to their own company," and the company "lifted up their voice with one accord to God." That is, the apostles resorted to their own company.

EB Is it right to say that wherever the testimony is effective there will be opposition, but it will not hinder the work of God from going on?

AJG No, exactly, the opposition, if we are with God in it, only furthers the work of God. There is nothing so assuring as that, a sense that God has the whole matter, not only of good but of evil, under His control, and will turn evil to account for further good.

HEB Is that not evidenced in the case of Saul of Tarsus? The Lord said to him from glory, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And was it not the features in the saints which Paul was persecuting? And then He turned evil into good, Paul was struck down and became a vessel of the testimony.

AJG Exactly. It is an important matter that we are now touching on in chapter 4 as to what threatens the testimony, and all the saints taking it up in prayer, because there is much developing in the world that is threatening: not yet come out in open violence perhaps, except in a few instances, but there is much developing that is threatening and it is not only to be taken up by those who are threatened, but the whole company is to take it up with God.

AAT Are you referring to the threatening from what is outside or what is inside?

AJG Oh, from outside. Satan will also work from the inside, if he can, if anyone of us gives him a loop-hole, but it is the Trade Union movement for one thing, and other things of that nature, that one has specially in mind. There is what is very threatening in certain parts of the world, and as recognising the threat the saints should take it up in prayer with God.

RS Is there not also in it that the Lord fortifies the saints in view of what is coming. He can look ahead and even fortify us, and tell us to be quiet, that the Spirit will speak at the time when the hour comes?

AJG Quite so.

EB So we see the need to keep in touch with the current ministry, that the Lord may be able to disclose His mind to us in relation to what is coming?

AJG Yes, and to keep our ears open as to anything that is happening that affects the testimony. So that the apostles having been threatened and being let go, they went immediately to their own company, and they merge with the company, and then the whole company takes it up in prayer.

CB I was thinking of the power of speaking in connection with the setting out of the testimony. Is that confined to the apostles, or is it to be continued in us, as formed by the Spirit?

AJG It is intended that we should all be able to speak. We have the Spirit for that purpose; all may not be gifted, but all can speak. Surely we ought to be able to say something that we know and that we have.

CB I was thinking of Acts 14, it says they so spake that a multitude believed.

AJG Well, exactly, it only shows that we need to cultivate dependence on the Spirit so that our speaking may be *in* the Spirit.

HP "They lifted up their voice with one accord to God." They were dependent on God.

AJG Quite so, and it has often been pointed out that what they ask for is that the Lord should just look upon their threatenings (chapter 4: 29), "and give to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word, in that thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders take place through the name of thy holy servant Jesus." So that their prayer is not to be relieved, or to be preserved even, but just that the Lord might look upon the threatenings and then give power that the testimony might continue in the grace that belongs to it.

RS You notice the difference between the prayer here and many of the prayers in the Psalms, where they were praying to God earnestly that the enemies might be destroyed, but Christianity having come in, the Spirit being here, prayer takes on a different feature, like the feature of the Man that was here, does it not?

AJG Exactly. That is a very important thing to bear in mind, for there is a great danger sometimes as the violence of men or their unreasonableness increases, that our spirits should become wrongly affected by it, but until the Lord comes the dispensation is one of pure grace towards men and we are to be kept in accord with that by the Spirit.

CBl Is that the reason why the apostle says "persevere in prayer"?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HLH The effective answer here to the threatening was the fact that they had a tangible evidence of what was going on, in the man that was healed. Do you not think that that would encourage us, that while there may be threatenings yet we can draw attention to something that is the work of God.

AJG Exactly, and that is a very important matter in the gospel preaching. You have the saints who are a support to it, and you can call upon them,

so to speak, to attest to the reality of what you are speaking about.

SC Is it not well for us to notice the spirit of the apostles when they were threatened?

AJG Exactly. "Peter and John answering said to them, if it be righteous before God to listen to you rather than to God, judge ye; for as for us we cannot refrain from speaking of the things which we have seen and heard."

HLH Having taken that stand before those who were threatening, they now turn to God and ask for power that they may be granted boldness to speak in that name. They were threatened severely no longer to speak "in this name."

AJG Quite so.

RAE Is the manner in which they address God here very encouraging for us in the presence of these threatenings?

AJG I think it is. We are very inclined to be afraid of men, but if we were more before God we should be less afraid of men. "Lord, thou art the God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them" - so what is man against that?

AJG Well then, from verse 32 onwards shows that the effect of threatening is just to bind the saints together more than ever. Verses 32 and 33 are very similar to the end of chapter 2, but it seems if anything to emphasise it, "The heart and soul of the multitude of those that had believed were one, and not one said that anything of what he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them: and with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." So the testimony was to the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but there was a very marked binding together of the saints as a result of their all taking up together this threat to the testimony.

WSW Would you say that verse 31 would be God's answer to the prayer? "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled shook,

and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness."

AJG There is nothing like the consciousness of the presence of the Spirit to strengthen and encourage the saints. It gives a sense that God is with us.

LAC Would the protection of the saints be connected with the service of angels, and the Spirit's service be the furtherance of the testimony in the features that you have been referring to?

AJG I think the Spirit's service is on spiritual lines, that is in bringing forward the truth and strengthening the saints in the testimony, encouraging their hearts and binding them together in love and so on. But if it is necessary for actual intervention in a material way, I think that is given to angels to do, but they are, of course, under divine command. On the other hand it is well to bear in mind, I think, that the divine intention is not that we should be spared suffering, I mean the testimony is to go through on the principle of suffering. The Lord really is the chief sufferer. He is "The Lamb," and according to Revelation that is a "little lamb," that is to say, it stresses the outward weakness of the position and the suffering connected with it. But then the Lamb is now glorified, and we are to become the Lamb's wife, and hence we must not expect that the Lord will keep us out of suffering.

CM Paul told Timothy to take his share in suffering.

AJG Quite so.

WH If any man would live godly in Christ Jesus he must suffer?

AJG Yes, suffer persecution.

VB You referred earlier in your outline to the great and high wall in connection with this. Would you say something more about that?

AJG I was referring to chapter 5. In verse 13, we read, "Of the rest *durst* no man join them." That is, there was such holiness characterising the saints, that no one who had not the Holy Spirit dared attempt to join them. So that the wall, the true separation that should mark saints, was not a code of regulations, it was simply what was built up in the souls of the saints.

AAT Speaking of threatening again. Is it not so, that while the threatening may come from the outside, all that we do is to appeal to God to behold the threatening. We do not adjust the difficulties, we keep our hands off, but we can call God's attention to it.

AJG Yes, I think so. That the Lord might give wisdom or direction as to a course that might be taken, but what they do here is to ask the Lord to behold

it, as though that is all that is necessary. As it says, In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. You put the matter before Him, and the peace of God keeps your minds and hearts by Christ Jesus.

LBl Would what we have in Daniel come in here, they say to the king, "We have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, ...but if not... we will not serve thy gods."

AJG Quite so. They were just going to move forward, maintaining the truth.

LBl Would you say the high wall would prevent any who are unreal from desiring to break bread with us. The high wall should be kept up?

AJG Exactly.

AY Would you say that this is the great power,

the power of prayer, by which things are carried through, in which we are able to express our dependence upon God, and God comes in for us in order that His things may be carried through and sustained?

AJG Yes, the testimony is the great thing, the assembly is the pillar and base of the truth. The truth has been called in question ever since the serpent said to the woman, Hath God said? And then he says, Ye shall not surely die. That is, the devil's suggestion was that God was not truthful. He was not to be relied upon, and He was withholding from man something that was good for him, and there has thus been a challenge to the truth from the very start. And that is what God is meeting, and that is what we are here for, as the pillar and base of the truth, that God should be set forth in His holiness and His love, and in righteousness practically, whatever God is in His nature and attributes is to be set forth in the assembly.

CB The wall of the city in Revelation has moral foundations.

AJG Exactly, and we see that being formed in the saints in the early chapters of the Acts.

RS So it was the work of the twelve? Paul came in later.

AJG Paul came in later in connection with the gates, I suppose. Every gate was of one pearl, but the wall of the city is connected with the names of the twelve.

WSW Would the words "great and high suggest that it would be great enough to preserve everything that was for God, and high enough to exclude everything that was evil.

AJG Yes, quite so.

MSS The appreciation of holiness would be developed in chapter 4? It refers twice to "Thy holy servant Jesus."

AJG That is very striking, and so the effort to intimidate by threatening, having failed, Satan changes his tactics in chapter 5, and seeks to introduce corruption through the brethren, for I suppose Ananias and Sapphira were true saints, although they allowed themselves to come under the influence of evil, and to commit this terrible sin.

RS It is to be noticed with them that it was this matter of truth and lie?

AJG Yes, exactly. And evidently what prompted it is what we have in the last two verses of chapter 4, that there was one who was outstandingly devoted and who was such a comfort that the apostles named him the son of consolation, so that he acquired a reputation, rightly, and Ananias and Sapphira think that they would get a reputation but without the full measure of sacrifice. That is they would get a reputation for devotedness and they would only give a part of the price, retaining part for themselves.

WH Barnabas here was like what you have in verse 32, putting his heart and soul in the matter. Not so with Ananias and Sapphira.

AJG Quite so.

HEB Is that a feature of imitation described by the Lord in the parable in the gospels, when the blade appeared and it bore fruit, and then the tares appeared also?

AJG I would not say that, because the tares are the sons of the wicked one, the tares are definitely evil people, they are not believers at all. I do not think there is any ground for supposing that Ananias and Sapphira were not believers, although they committed this dreadful sin and were cut off.

MC Would you say too that what characterises the first man was seen in them?

AJG Yes, that is a warning to us all not to open our hearts to Satan in the slightest degree.

Peter says to Ananias, Why has Satan filled thy heart? He must have opened his heart to Satan. And so it says of Judas in John 13, "The devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." And then later on Satan himself enters into him. So it shows how important it is to keep our hearts more than anything that is guarded, for out of it are the issues of life.

RS It shows that in those beginnings there had been earlier trifling?

AJG Quite so. And collusion, too, between Ananias and his wife.

AAT I suppose you would emphasise that the attack at this moment is on the assembly?

AJG Yes, it is indeed.

AAT The assembly had just been established, and the enemy had no place in it, but here the attack came right in from the inside.

AJG I think if we bear in mind that the assembly is the pillar and base of the truth, that God's name is connected with the assembly, so that His reputation publicly, if one may use that expression, is bound up with it, we can see the need for watchfulness, for Satan is always opposed to whatever God is doing; he will always be near, prowling round, so to speak, to see if there is some brother or sister through whom he can get in. Therefore the need for keeping our hearts more than anything that is guarded, and not allowing the beginning of some evil principle or suggestion, not allowing it to have place in our minds.

AAT It is strange that at the beginning of Israel's history Achan was guilty, and in such a way that immediate action was taken.

AJG Exactly, I believe this is in a way, the counterpart to Achan's sin, this sin of Ananias and Sapphira, because Achan coveted among other things the goodly Babylonish garment, and that is exactly what Ananias and Sapphira were coveting, they wanted a reputation among the saints, for devotedness and yet it was just what the first man wanted to adorn himself with, so that it was really Babylonish; it was man obtaining glory in the things of God, a most subtle thing, and any who serve have particularly to watch against that.

AY Would you say it is a very serious weapon that Satan is using today, the weapon of imitation? And we have to be thoroughly guarded against it.

AJG Yes, indeed. And hence the great comfort to us that the Holy Spirit Himself has come in to take up His abode in us, and the great need on our part to be sensitive as to His presence, because that is a great preservative.

LAC Would it not be very sobering to bear continually in mind that Satan has before him to use even the smallest failure to develop it into a distinct affront to the Spirit of God here?

AJG It would indeed, and hence we all have to be watchful and the great thing is to have short reckonings and not allow things to go on. The scripture says "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," so that, at any rate, by eventide you have time to review things and not carry over anything unjudged

that has not been according to God, but it is not safe to allow it as long as that.

RS So that even if the element of ambition crept in on us and we were practically recognising the Spirit, He would surely make us sensitive of it, so as to judge ourselves and be recovered to the path without being publicly known?

AJG Exactly. The scripture says that if we judge ourselves then were we not judged, and Mr. Raven used to say that the Lord will never expose us if we judge ourselves. It is only because we fail to judge ourselves that He finds it necessary perhaps to expose us.

AAT But why does it say here, lie to the Holy Spirit?

AJG God was there, dwelling in His house in the Spirit. Before Him a lie is not necessarily something actually said in words, but our actions may be a lie. So it says in Ephesians, Putting away falsehood, speak everyone truth with his neighbour; so we refuse everything that is false in character. Ananias sold his possession and put aside part of the price, his wife also being privy to it; and having brought a certain part, laid it at the feet of the apostles. What he said we do not know, but evidently he conveyed the impression that they had brought the whole price, that they were surrendering the whole thing for the testimony's sake. And so Peter says, "Why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit." He is stressing the fact that the Holy Spirit is in the matter. Then later Sapphira deliberately lies in word, she says, "Yes, for so much." And Peter says, "ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." We are reminded of what Paul says later, in writing to the Corinthians, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIANITY (3)

Acts 6:1-4; Acts 6:8-10; Acts 10:9-20; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:1-4; Acts 11:15-18

AJG What we might have before us in these passages is that the truth is opposed all along the line in one way and another, but on the other hand that it is carried forward by the operations of the Spirit who, while recognising distinct gift and leadership as in the apostles, also makes room at times for others whom He may bring forward and set in the testimony. That is specially seen in Stephen, and also in Philip, that while what is authoritative as in the apostles is not set aside, the sovereignty of the Spirit to use whom He will is guarded, and in that way any tendency to officialism is guarded against. And then also, if there is any special development of the truth as there was in chapter 10, Peter's attitude in the matter is one that we might all take as a guide, in that he moves patiently and obediently, and the truth gradually opens up to him and becomes confirmed to him by the Spirit as he thus moves. That is, we shall see as we come to chapter 10, that the truth is not understood by Peter in its fulness all at once, but as moving patiently and in a subject spirit he is led into it. And then in chapter 11, when the matter is contested by those of the circumcision, that Peter is patient and sets forth the matter in order, in such a way as to carry all with him. But through it all the working of the Spirit Himself is prominent. So that what is here is that the Spirit is in charge of the whole position, and establishing the truth all along the line, notwithstanding the opposition that arises from time to time. I think that is what will come out, among other things, in these chapters we have read. Stephen especially, and Philip, are examples of doing with one's might whatever the hand finds to do, and becoming, as it were, promoted as the result. Stephen especially being taken on by the Spirit for a distinctive service which he carried out well, and for the honour of being the first Christian martyr. Chapter 6 introduces another movement of the enemy in opposition. We had Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5, and then the leaders shutting up the apostles in prison and the way this was met, but now there is another movement introduced by the enemy in a spirit of murmuring, finding its basis in a certain carelessness and apparent partisanship in the administration to the widows. But that is met by the Spirit taking up vessels who will addict themselves in a godly way to the service of caring for the temporal needs of the saints.

HLH Is the selection of men like Stephen and Philip and others in line with the Lord's appointment of seventy others also, after having appointed the disciples?

AJG I would think so, except that these were appointed to deal with material matters primarily, but dealing with them faithfully in the Spirit, two of them become developed in spiritual power, that is to say in the ministry of what is spiritual.

HLH Yes, I was thinking of the seventy in Luke where it says that the workmen are few but the harvest is great. Would that not be a suggestion of the development of the work of God and the spread of the testimony, calling for more workmen?

AJG It would, and I think that helps, because whatever our hand finds to do, we are to do it with our might, but looking to the Spirit to help in relation to it, and those who do so are likely to develop further, as it says in Timothy that those who minister well, that is, perform deacon service well, "obtain for themselves a good degree, and much boldness in faith which is in Christ Jesus."

RAE Would this principle of sovereign selection be seen in Amos, in his prophecy he says, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and Jehovah took me as I followed the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people." Would that be in line with what you were saying, the following of the flock suggesting that care for the saints which the Lord makes a sovereign selection from?

AJG Yes, I think so, he was doing that. That is, he was doing what Paul said later of Timothy, that he was caring with genuine feeling how the saints were getting on. He was following the flock, that is, seeing how they were moving, and Jehovah seeing such an one took him up and said, "Go prophesy unto my people Israel." I think that is always to be borne in mind, that while there is what is sovereign and authoritative in the giving of gift, there is always room for devotedness, apart from gift. And devotedness under the Lord's hand will develop into spiritual ability.

AAT The point brought out here is what we would say today national feeling?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think that it is clear that that was what was at the bottom of the matter. It may not have been very serious in a sense, but it was there. So that the Hellenists were neglected, their widows were overlooked in the daily ministration.

SP Is there not a possibility of such a state of things coming in, that the enemy could use in the present day?

AJG Yes, there is always a possibility. That is why it is important for us to note these things. They were allowed to come in at the beginning so that we might see how they were met.

HN We should be guarded then in relation to what is official?

AJG Well, I was only thinking that for the moment the twelve apostles are out of sight, not that the Lord is setting them aside by any means, or anything of that sort, because it is quite clear that in chapter 9, Peter is passing through all quarters and being used of the Lord, and in chapter 10 he is given the commission of admitting the Gentiles. So the apostles are not in any sense being set aside, or displaced, but at the same time the Spirit has the right to take up whom He will, so for the moment the apostles, who were, if one might use the expression, officially the leaders, were out of sight, and Stephen is brought forward and then Philip. We might have thought that for a ministry such fell to Stephen, the Lord would have taken up Peter, but He did not. He took up Stephen.

S.P. Why is that?

AJG Just to emphasise, I think, the sovereignty of the Spirit to use whom He will.

WH It shows the liberty of the apostles, it says they called the multitude of the disciples together and told them to look out men from amongst them.

AJG Quite so. And the apostles themselves recognised that it was not for them to do everything. So that they were developing, in the hands of the Spirit, in the features proper to the body, that it was not for them to have everything in their hands.

MC Is devotedness not seen in Stephen too?

AJG Exactly. I think that is an important matter, because any one of us can be devoted without gift. It is a question of "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might," as it says in Ecclesiastes (chapter 9: 10). And anything the Lord puts in our way we should take up, however small it may seem to be, and do it with our might as to the Lord, and in the grace and power of the Spirit. And those who are devoted may be taken up for something further.

CBl So therefore there is no apostolic succession?

AJG No, quite so. The whole matter is in the hands of the Spirit.

CB I was about to ask, if every attack of the enemy in connection with the movements of the testimony brings out greater resources in the Spirit for the carrying forward of the testimony?

AJG That is exactly what comes out.

HN It is the Spirit's day, so that what is official should have no place in our minds?

AJG Quite so. And so it has no place in the minds of the apostles. I am not suggesting that they were official in spirit at all, only they had been officially set in that position to inaugurate Christianity. But notwithstanding that they are happily subject to what was there in the Spirit.

HOE It is convenient sometimes for us to excuse ourselves by saying we have no gift, but everybody can be devoted, is that not so?

AJG Exactly. It says, "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ."

LAC The choice here is restricted to "men from among yourselves." Is it not in mind that we should move in that way as amongst the saints, humble and simple, if we are to be in line with the Spirit's choice?

AJG Yes, indeed. So the apostles say, "Look out, therefore, *brethren*, from among yourselves," addressing them in that way as brethren.

CM Would you say, in localities that are small, and where there is no gift, that if there is devotedness the Lord will regard it, and bring forward that which is needed for the moment?

AJG Yes. I think it is open to anyone who sees that there is a need to pray for gift, as long as he is marked by love. It says, "Follow after love, and be emulous of spiritual manifestations," but especially that of prophecy. The great thing is to be marked by following after love. That is that you are not seeking something for yourself, you are desiring genuinely the good of the saints. If that is the case then, and in your locality you feel the need of prophecy, or the need of a measure of power in teaching, or what not, well ask the Lord to give gift, why not? It is a question of meeting the need in power.

CM It is open to the sisters to pray for that too?

AJG Exactly. And then the sisters have a great part that they can play in caring for the souls of the saints. Older sisters especially should take up the responsibility as older sisters, to care for the younger ones, and to be an example to them.

FHP Would you say that all those features were seen in Stephen right up to the very end? He was spent in love. I was thinking of the way he dealt with need.

AJG Quite so, he was a spiritual man. It says, "Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought wonders and great signs among the people," which is very remarkable, for he was not an apostle, and yet he wrought wonders and great signs. And it says in verse 10, "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit", (capital S), "with which he spoke." So that the Spirit enters into his testimony in an irresistible way, and yet he was not an apostle. And so far as we know had not been specially gifted, but had just taken up deacon service and performed it well.

WH Would you call that a man who was devoted to the testimony?

AJG Yes, and that he, as it says in Timothy, acquired for himself a good degree, he was promoted, you might say.

TG Would you say that the apostles, in this matter of the attack of the enemy, show how they felt the matter, so they call the disciples together so that all could take part in relation to the truth being held?

AJG Yes, quite so.

VB The way this attack was met resulted in the word of God increasing, and now the disciples in Jerusalem multiply and a great crowd of the priests obeyed the faith. Would the priests represent the religious element?

AJG Well, they are the religious element, but then of course, they became genuine believers, they were priests but they obeyed the faith.

MSS Is it not worth noticing that after opposition and each attack of the enemy, there is increase? In chapter 4, after the apostles were put in ward, it says, "many of those who had heard the word believed." Then after the attack through Ananias and Sapphira, believers were more than ever added to the Lord, and after this third attack there is this feature of increase again?

AJG Exactly, and that shows that if we go on with the Spirit dependently, we shall see how all along the line He will turn opposition to account, to bring out some fresh feature of the truth, and not only in an objective way but as forming it in the saints.

EB I suppose the Lord would give us to see that in all of these attacks the testimony is going through in triumph?

AJG Yes, and the secret of that is that it is in the hands of the Spirit, that God Himself is here in charge of the position.

TG The apostles say, "we will give ourselves up to prayer and the ministry of the word," would that be that they would allow nothing to come in and hinder them from the truth being carried on, and their giving place to the Spirit?

AJG Yes, and that they recognised that that was peculiarly their responsibility to minister the word, and therefore they would addict themselves to it. But we first get prayer, showing that the most gifted person has to resort particularly to prayer if he is to minister in any power. And the apostles say, "We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word." That was what was particularly their responsibility. Other things could be taken up by others; so really they were paving the way for the truth of the body to be developed.

TG As was said a little while ago, that while all do not have gift, yet any can take part in carrying exercise in relation to things that come in amongst us.

AJG Yes.

AT Referring to all not having gift, all may not have specific gift but all believers should have gift, would you not say?

AJG Well, it says, "To each one of us has been given grace," that is the Lord has given each one some impression of Himself and of the grace of God, and we should use what we have. There is a parable that one gave each of his servants one pound, but the question is what each did with it. One gained ten pounds and one gained five, and one wrapped his pound up in a napkin.

SC Would you say that the apostles were under the control of the Holy Spirit in nipping this thing in the bud according to verse 2?

AJG Yes, quite so.

JW Can an ungifted brother be given a gift?

AJG It lies in the sovereignty of the Spirit. It lies in the sovereignty of the Lord too, but it is viewed in Corinthians particularly as in the sovereignty of the Spirit, but then Corinthians also shows that it is quite legitimate to desire gift. That would take the form of prayer, providing that our motives are pure, and that we are following after love and not wanting to gratify or exalt ourselves.

ELE What is the difference between that and the gift in Ephesians?

AJG Well, the gift in Ephesians is viewed as given by Christ who has gone up far above all heavens; I think Mr. Taylor has said that the point of view in Ephesians is that the Lord is far above all the conditions and operations of evil, and is operating purely from the standpoint of divine purpose and the thoughts of divine love, and so with irresistible power He gives gifts for the effectuation of those thoughts. In Corinthians, the point of view is that the assembly is down here in the presence of evil and hostility, but the Spirit in charge of the position, and gives gifts as He pleases.

ELE And they are subject to desire?

AJG Yes.

AAT There is a word used here several times in connection with the Spirit, it says, in the third verse, look out men "*full* of the Holy Spirit," then in the fifth verse, that Stephen was a man "*full* of faith and the Holy Spirit." And you remember the same word was used about Peter, he was *filled* with the Spirit. Are there degrees, or measures, in which the Spirit can obtain room in us?

AJG Yes, I suppose so, these references to being full of the Holy Spirit, I suppose, are just a reminder to us that it is a question of getting rid of things from our minds that would displace the Spirit, and allowing Him to take possession of them and of our spirits.

ELE What do you understand by "God giveth not the Spirit by measure"? Should the words "unto him" be there or not?

AJG Apparently not. I thought that would be descriptive of this present dispensation, that in contrast to past dispensations when the Spirit was given by measure, coming upon persons and so on. God is now giving the Spirit in an unmeasured way, that is, the Spirit has come in personally to dwell with us for ever.

MSS In Genesis 24 the servant raises the question, "Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge," would that lead on to one being filled with the Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so, so that in Ephesians it says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but *be* filled with the Spirit," showing that it is our side of the matter.

EB Is there any difference between having the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit?

AJG Yes, a very great difference, because a person who has the Spirit may grieve the Spirit, and if he grieves the Spirit he will not be filled with the Spirit.

SW Would you say that the features seen in Stephen in verse 5 are the basis on which the Spirit will operate?

AJG I think that is important, because the Holy Spirit operates in us in relation to our faith. If we are not characterised by faith, that is, if outlook is not in the direction of unseen things, I think the Spirit is greatly hampered. The Lord when He was here was greatly hampered on one occasion because of the unbelief of the persons among whom He was. He could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief, showing that the Lord was, in that sense,

dependent on conditions of faith. And so Paul with the man at Lystra, seeing that he had faith to be healed.

EMe Would you say that Ananias and Sapphira were lacking in these features of which you spoke, and therefore Satan had the opportunity of filling their hearts?

AJG Yes, that is right, and it is important too, because from time to time most sorrowful things happen amongst us and how is it that they happen? How is it that Satan gets such a place? It is because an opening has been afforded him.

RS Full of faith and the Holy Spirit would also come in in connection with any particular movement in the service, taking part, standing up to pray; numbers are shy of moving because of not having experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, but would not faith enter into the matter?

AJG I think so. If they would just get up in faith dependently, they would find the Spirit support their faith.

MSS You referred to the service for which Stephen was taken up. Had you in mind to refer to his address to the Jews?

AJG Yes, it may be it was in divine wisdom, that one of the twelve was not permitted to perform that service, because it was not exactly a service that was in keeping with the new dispensation. It was a condemnation of the leaders in Jerusalem in that they had always resisted the Holy Spirit. It was really sealing their doom. So that there was no real grace in Stephen's address, it was in the power of the Spirit but it was an indictment, not an offer of pardon, but an indictment. The position had gone too far, there was no hope for the religious leaders and their system in Jerusalem. But while his ministry is an indictment of the old system, his spirit is a commendation of the new, for in his spirit he represents Christianity.

ELE In the way he died and what he said?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HLH It says that he was *full* of grace and power; grace was a leading feature there?

AJG Quite so.

AAT Which must have affected Saul.

AJG Yes, quite so.

CB The two together, the grace that marked him and the indictment, would have to do with matters connected with administration among God's people?

That the grace that marked Stephen should also mark us?

AJG Well, particularly in caring for the material needs of the saints, a good deal of grace and wisdom and spirituality are needed to do it suitably; they are often delicate matters, but they afford opportunity for the grace of Christ to come into expression.

ELE If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not.

AJG Exactly.

CBl Was it grace that marked Stephen when he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"?

AJG Yes, that was really the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of this dispensation. I think it is well to see that Stephen's ministry was an indictment of the old order, but his spirit was a commendation of the new.

HOE The word then was a final word to the Jews before the Gentiles were brought in?

AJG Yes. Particularly I suppose in Jerusalem, because wherever Paul went after that he preached to the Jews first. So that God had not finally cast off the Jews at this point, but He was rejecting the responsible leaders in Jerusalem.

ELE It culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, I suppose, about Anno Domini 70?

AJG Yes, quite so.

MSS You referred yesterday to the Lord saying that when the disciples were brought before authorities, the Spirit would teach them in the hour itself what they should say, would that be seen particularly in Stephen's address?

AJG Quite so, because he had no idea that he was going to be called upon to give this address.

He had no time to prepare it, and yet it is a most masterly address going over the history of the people with this one point in view that they had always resisted the Holy Spirit; "As your fathers, ye also," he says.

CM Is it not remarkable how well he knew the scriptures?

AJG We should all know the Scriptures. The Spirit cannot help us much if we do not know the Scriptures, and therefore it is of the utmost importance that we should read the Scriptures, all of them. Whether we understand them or not, get them in our minds, so that we know what is there. And then when we

have got them in our minds - there is a store in our minds that the Spirit can direct our attention to as occasion requires.

RS I was going to ask if although this indictment was made, there is still blessing for individual Jews who believe on the Lord Jesus?

AJG Oh yes, indeed, a Jew can be saved provided he is prepared to come in as a man, and not as a Jew. He must renounce his Jewish position, because the promises to the fathers are now in abeyance, and wrath has come upon the Jews nationally to the uttermost, but he can come in as a man. But we should now pass on to chapter 10.

ELE There was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, he is a *man*.

AJG Exactly. Now the testimony was going to take on an entirely new aspect, that is the Gentiles were going to be brought in, and unless we take time to think about it we can easily not realise what a critical moment this was in the testimony. Hitherto the work of God had been practically confined to the Jews. We do get the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch, but it had been practically confined to the Jews. And now the Gentiles were to be admitted, and we can easily understand what a difficulty it would be likely to create in the minds of the Jewish believers, because their position, till now, as apart from the Gentiles, had been of God, and God was altering His ways and was going to bring the Gentiles into the greatest thoughts of blessing that His love had devised.

HAL Until this matter was settled about the Gentiles, the truth of the body could not go forward, would you say that?

AJG Well, it was there in the beginning of its workings, I suppose, but it really needed the Gentiles to bring it in fully.

CM Is it not normal - Simeon says, "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."

AJG Well, that is a striking example of the way the Spirit can help us. The Spirit had full place with Simeon and although he was a Jew he says, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," putting the Gentiles first, which shows how the Spirit can lead us into the truth even before it has been publicly opened up.

HEB I wanted to ask a similar question, in connection with Simeon's intimation. It was the Lord coming in, and when the Lord came in he spoke of "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Here you would say it is connected with the Spirit, the Spirit being in charge in His operations. How do you put those two things together?

AJG It was the Lord coming in, and He was the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel. He is still that, of course, but now it is the Spirit in charge of operations. In chapter 9 it seems to be the Lord in heaven directing operations, converting Saul of Tarsus and directing Ananias and so on, but here the Spirit seems to be in charge of what is proceeding.

A.A.T. And using Peter?

AJG Quite so.

SC I was wondering if Isaiah's prophecy would be understood by the Jews?

AJG I do not suppose it was, and there is much that we do not understand in the Scriptures, until suddenly the Spirit throws light upon it.

MSS Would you say that there had been certain indications which should have made Peter more prepared than he was? The Lord told them at the end of Luke's gospel, to preach to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Peter himself says in Acts 2, that the promise was to all who were afar off (verse 39), involving, would you say, the Gentiles?

AJG Well, it may be, but I do not know that we should allow in our minds any thought of Peter being at fault. It is rather, as you say, that there were these indications, and that is often the way, that when the Lord brings forward some further feature of the truth, we notice in the Scriptures that which is confirmatory of it.

SP Would you say that this distinct movement to the Gentiles is consequent on the position the Lord fills as at the right hand of God now?

AJG Quite so.

SP Because Stephen says he saw the heavens opened and the Son of man standing, and then in the next chapter it speaks of His speaking to Saul of Tarsus, and now in this chapter the Gentiles, as though there was a distinct change and movement from that position.

AJG But when Stephen said he saw the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, it was an indication really that God would go out to the Gentiles. He does not say, I see the Messiah, he says, I see the Son of man, which is the title the Lord takes in relation to all men.

AY The keys had been given to Peter. The Lord said, "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom." Would you say that it was being operated now and put into effect by the blessed Holy Spirit in opening the door to the Gentiles?

AJG Well, He was preparing Peter to do that. It was Peter who was to do it, but He is preparing him for it, and so Peter is given this vision. The vision is

important, he beholds the heavens opened and a certain vessel descending as a great sheet, bound by the four corners and let down to the earth. And then at the end it was straightway taken up into heaven. So it is a vessel that comes out of heaven and goes back to heaven. It is to give us a right view of the assembly, that it is heavenly in character. It is a vessel that is heavenly in its constitution, a vessel of divine workmanship, formed after Christ, and the vessel of the Spirit of the heavenly Man, and yet those who compose it are according to nature of the character of quadrupeds, creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven.

ELE Is that not Ephesians? In Ephesians we are reminded that we once who were Gentiles, called the uncircumcision, were without God and without hope in the world. Heavenly light was brought in.

AJG Exactly.

VB Why do you think this was done thrice?

AJG Well, in order to confirm it abundantly. Twice is adequate witness, but thrice is abundant witness. So that where there is something very important, we usually get three times. The Lord prayed three times in Gethsemane, and Paul besought the Lord thrice that the thorn might be removed from him.

EB Would you say that we have all to admit that we are very slow learners, but where our minds are not made up there is ability to take on the things of God?

AJG I think the chapter will support that; we get first of all the vision, and then in verse 17 it says, "As Peter doubted in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean," for he was not at all clear what it meant, and then in verse 19, "as Peter continued pondering over the vision, the Spirit said to him," As he ponders the Spirit speaks to him. But even then the Spirit does not make everything clear, the Spirit simply tells him that there are three men seeking him, and he is to rise up and go down and go with them, nothing doubting, "because *I* have sent them"; but so far that is all that Peter knows. And then he goes to Cornelius and he says to Cornelius, verse 29, "I inquire therefore for what reason ye have sent for me." He is still feeling his way. He is still enquiring. And then he shows that he had got the good of the vision to some extent, at any rate, for in verse 34 he says, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." He is beginning to come to that, that he is not to despise anyone, not even Gentiles; God had said to him, "What God has cleansed do not thou make common," and now he sees that God is beginning to work in the Gentiles. And then as he preaches the Holy

Spirit fell on all those who were hearing the word, and that made the matter perfectly clear to Peter. He had no further doubts whatever, but it was the Spirit's own movements that settled the matter. But what is so important about it is to see that he did not see it all at once, but because he did not see it all at once he did not resist it, but he went on pondering, and in patience, and then the thing became clear.

CBl Does that not show clearly that when God gives light to His people and we have exercise as to it and desire for it that He will bring us to it gradually?

AJG That is it. We are not to resist, we are to weigh things over, and the Spirit will show us things provided we are willing to learn and have not got our minds made up against it.

ELE The same thing is seen in Philip and the eunuch. He is not told everything at once, he goes a step at a time.

AJG That is it.

LBr Would you say that what is to be observed in the vision here is that we should not be occupied with what is in the sheet but where it is from?

AJG Well, yes, except of course, he had to look at what was there or else he would not have been prepared to admit Cornelius. But he saw that this heavenly vessel included quadrupeds, and when he speaks about it in chapter 11, he says, wild beasts of the earth too, which are not mentioned in chapter 10, so that he received a definite impression that it was such as you would not have expected to be included in the heavenly vessel who were being included.

LBr So he speaks to Peter in connection with the contents?

AJG Quite so.

CB It would show therefore, that the way the Spirit dealt with Peter would present to us His tender care and patience with us if we desire to learn. We might be slow but the Spirit will wait on us?

AJG Well, quite so. The *Spirit* spoke to him. The Spirit is here indwelling each one of us, and if we are only ready to be more subject and more dependent we shall find that the Spirit will teach us more than perhaps we expect.

EB I suppose the mere fact that it was repeated more than once would show how patiently the Spirit is waiting on us?

AJG Well, exactly.

AAT The point is not to refuse the truth but to ponder over it.

AJG Quite so.

MC The Lord in speaking to Peter says, "On this rock will I build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it," as though he was to go on step by step as he entered on that line.

AJG Peter's history is education to us all in that way, because although he was the leading apostle yet he moved in this dependent way, not assuming to know everything but ready to be taught by the Spirit.

SC In verse 36 would you say because the apostle is subject there is an advance and he can speak of the Lord being "Lord of all"?

AJG Yes, exactly.

TG Anyone seeking to serve the saints should see that he puts them on the same footing as himself, as Peter says, "I myself also am a man."

AJG That is very important as showing that he was preserved in a spirit of lowliness. It is striking that this incident should occur, because in the Romish system, which makes so much of Peter, the head of the system requires homage, and even some of his subordinates do. But here Peter would not accept it at all. He says, "Rise up, I myself also am a man," and went in, talking with him. So the Spirit of God has foreseen all that would develop and has made provision against it.

HOE You were emphasising that everything that was done with Peter at this time was the action of the Holy Spirit. Is not that in keeping with the Lord saying, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high"?

AJG Yes. I think it is most striking how in this chapter the Spirit is in charge, and the servant whom He is going to use has got to be dependent and patient, and to come into the truth on those lines.

CM Is not Peter viewed as available on the housetop praying and then getting the ecstasy, seeing the vision and so on?

AJG Quite so. He was not frittering his time away, he was waiting for the meal that they were preparing, but he was using his time praying.

RA Will you tell us why the heavens were opened before Peter's eyes?

AJG I think he was being impressed now with the thought that heavenly things were now coming into view. Hitherto, of course, God's ways had been with Israel, and had been connected with the earth, but now God was going to open up heavenly things, and they are the greatest things. The assembly is a heavenly vessel, it is heavenly in origin as of Christ, and it is heavenly in

destiny, but just for the moment it is down here on earth in testimony, but it is well held, so to speak, the sheet was held by the four corners.

GM Is there anything we can learn by the different way that the gospel was presented to the Jew at Pentecost and how Peter presents it here to Cornelius?

AJG Peter preaches intelligently according to his congregation, so to speak. To the Jews at Pentecost, of course, he would bring home to them that they had crucified Jesus, their Messiah really, but God had exalted Him and that there was blessing for them in His name on repentance. But here he was saying He is Lord of all things.

GM And he says nothing about repentance as he speaks to Cornelius.

AJG No. He says, "He that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."

LAC Referring to the sheet again, is it stressing here that the Lord Jesus is introducing the sheet from heaven and the Holy Spirit is bringing Peter into the understanding of the divine mind concerning those who are in it? Would it be the Lord's voice in verse 13, from heaven?

AJG Well, I am not sure that we can state so definitely as that. It might well be the Spirit's voice all through.

RAE Would you say that what we have been saying as to the truth being in the Spirit's charge and carried forward in His hand, is a view of His activities which we have not paid much attention to as we should have, over the years past?

AJG I think so. We have accepted the truth, but I think the import of it is only just now beginning to be borne in upon us.

RAE Does the recognition of that really provide the underlying basis of liberty in addressing Him publicly?

AJG I think it does. But it all has to be regulated by the liberty which the Spirit Himself affords. I think that is the thing to be borne in mind, that in that sense apart from scriptures like Numbers 21, and what might be gathered from other scriptures of a typical nature, we have, so far as I know, no prescription as to addressing the Spirit, but it is there in the Scriptures in a typical way and therefore, in the measure in which the Spirit Himself affords liberty for it, it may be done.

ELE Yes. Do you not think the apostles addressed the Spirit?

AAT Peter speaks to the Spirit in this chapter?

AJG Yes, he does.

E.L.E. He says, "Lord!"

AJG Yes.

RS Would you say that the speaking of the Spirit is commensurate with His authority?

AJG I would. I have thought a little lately, that we are inclined to speak, and rightly so, about the lowly service of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps not sufficiently recognise that He is authoritative, being God Himself dwelling among us. While He is indeed serving in a wonderfully lowly way, yet it is one of the Godhead who is thus serving.

AAT In the economy He has a different place from what He has in the Godhead?

AJG Well, quite so, the Son and the Spirit have taken a mediatorial position in the economy, but then on the other hand Jesus has been *made* Lord and Christ, so that He has publicly an authoritative position, which in that sense the Holy Spirit has not. Nevertheless the Spirit says, "*I* have sent them" (chapter 10: 20), and "the work to which I have called them" (chapter 13: 2).

HEB I wanted to ask if the process and exercises through which Peter passed on this occasion were not in keeping with the state of transition you referred to a little while ago? This would help us as to why we have to be patient in regard to taking on things, that we maintain open minds as to what may be opened up to us from time to time. It was a transitional period, as you say.

AJG Quite so. Almost the whole of the truth which the apostles had in their day was lost by the assembly, but during the past 120 years the Lord has been steadily recovering it, but it is being recovered step by step, involving the recovery of that which had not been recovered previously, and therefore it is in the nature of what is transitional to us, that is, it is something new to us that is being brought out, but it is not new to Christianity. There is nothing being recovered to us that was not known by the apostles.

MSS It does not seem that Peter was actually slow in coming to this matter.

AJG No, I do not think he was. I think he is an example for us of patience in following up what the Spirit is saying and indicating, and then he suddenly comes into the full light of it when the Spirit fell on those who were hearing the word.

ELE When he comes to the explanation in chapter 11, he says, "Who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?"

AJG Exactly. He sees at once that it is what God is doing.

WT Would you say it is very exercising for us to see a Gentile here, Cornelius, not alone but he has his house with him. It was not himself alone who was a devout man, it says, one that feared God, but he had his house with him. The house is very essential as a support to what is of God here.

AJG It is. Christianity really requires the houses of the saints.

WT Cornelius's exercise was to have his house with him.

AJG Evidently it was, and he had certain instincts that perhaps were in advance of his day, so that he was in that sense, spiritually, a true child of Abraham. God said of Abraham that He knew him that he would command his children and his household after him, that they would keep the way of the Lord and so on. And Cornelius was in keeping with that although a Gentile.

RAE In referring to this matter in chapter 15, the great point in Peter's address is that the Spirit was given. As you say, the matter became clear to him at once when the Spirit fell on these persons. Then James follows and he says, "With this agree the words of the prophets." Would that show us that we learn things intuitively by virtue of the presence of the Spirit with us. And then we see how there are scriptures that we never thought of before that would confirm the truth to us?

AJG Yes, I think that is right.

MSS In verse 20, the Spirit says, "I have sent them." "I" there is emphatic. Would that be to call attention to His authority?

AJG Exactly. "*I* have sent them."

LAC Would it not also mean to us in this day that it is important to watch the Spirit's support in any matter that is introduced? And if the Spirit is giving His support we may well go with it?

AJG Yes, quite so. Now when we come to chapter 11, we see the same thing as before, for they of the circumcision contended with Peter, that is, the truth is not going forward without being contested. But God uses the opposition of the enemy to establish the truth. So they of the circumcision contend with Peter and what is to be noticed is the way that Peter meets it, "Peter began and set forth the matter to them in order," that is there is no suggestion of his taking umbrage at their calling in question what he had done, seeing that he was the leading apostle. On the contrary he just sets the matter forth in order, his thought being to carry all the brethren with him if possible. If they are capable of being carried we want them to be carried.

VB I suppose the way he learnt himself would supply him with grace to be patient with others?

AJG Yes. Quite so.

CM Is it not remarkable that the Holy Spirit came upon them before they were baptised?

AJG It is very remarkable. It just shows, I think, the sovereignty of the Spirit. But I suppose that with the Jews at Pentecost it was necessary that they should be baptised first; I do not think the Spirit would seal a Jew until he was baptised because he must dissociate himself formally from his identification with the nation that had crucified their Messiah.

CB That is what is meant by what was said to Paul, "Arise and get baptised, and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name"?

AJG I suppose so. It would apply to all that had marked Saul in his responsible history. So now Peter in meeting the objections in Jerusalem says, in verse 15, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them even as upon us also at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit. If then God has given them the same gift as also to us when we had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?" It was a simple and effective way of meeting the difficulty. He brings home to them that God was acting. And so it says, "When they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God saying, Then indeed God has to the nations also granted repentance to life." It is a remarkable example of the way the truth has been contested all along the line, but if the opposition is met patiently in the Spirit God will triumph by means of it, so that the testimony goes forward all the more.

RS So that although it is the Spirit speaking through Peter, his very way and manner amongst men would show that it was of God.

ELE The orderly presentation of the truth is greatly needed amongst us.

AJG Exactly, I agree.

LBr The assembly is the pillar and base of the truth.

AJG That is important. The assembly stands out in that way prominently in relation to the truth. It is important that the truth should be confirmed in us substantially, so that it is not only what we say but what we are.

SW Is it not important to take into account the sovereignty of God in bringing in the Gentiles on no lower level than that of the Jews?

AJG Exactly. No lower level at all, and God brings in both Jew and Gentile on a level entirely above anything that they would ever have had as Jews.

EM So that it is a repentance to life. Is it in line with the beginning, The words of *this* life?

AJG Yes, repentance unto life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRISTIANITY (4)

Acts 16: 6 - 10; Acts 20: 17 - 35; Acts 21: 4 - 6

AJG As we have only one reading left, I thought it wise not to spend time on the beginning of chapter 13, or chapter 15, although they are important passages. Chapter 13, as we know, telling us that there were in the assembly which was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, and as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go," and it says, "They therefore, having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia," and so on. So that that clearly establishes what we have already said as to the Holy Spirit being presented as in charge of Christianity, and in charge of the service and those engaged publicly in the service, and also as to certain moral conditions being necessary if the Holy Spirit is to be unhindered in His activities. So as it says, "they were ministering to the Lord and fasting," and then, "having fasted and prayed." Then chapter 15 gives us the greatest crisis in the history of the testimony, where there was a definite effort of the enemy to introduce the idea that Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the law. It is what Paul referred to in his epistle to the Galatians, and chapter 15 gives us the way it was met, by the brethren coming together and patiently waiting on God in regard of the matter; dependence and patience being seen particularly in the apostles. It says, that after much discussion Peter stood up, as though he did not immediately take a lead, but gave time for others to express themselves and for the Holy Spirit to direct him what he should do or say. And then as was remarked this morning, he stands up and reminds the brethren of what God was doing. He does not read any scripture but he just reminds them of what God was doing, sovereignly, in having given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles without any question at all of their keeping the law or being circumcised. And that should be sufficient for them. And then James stands up and confirms it by a word, quoting from Amos a scripture which I think it would be right to say in its literal interpretation looks on to the world to come; but giving it in the power of the Spirit an application to the existing exercise, and it was so living that the whole matter was settled, and when they sent a letter to the Gentile assemblies, they say, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." It is a model, really, of a decision in the Spirit arrived at by quiet waiting on God. We see James expressing a spiritual judgment in what he said, confirming it by Scripture. I thought perhaps this afternoon we might look at these scriptures we read, first emphasising the need, on the part of those who are moving in the work, to

move dependently and tentatively, and then chapter 20, which is most important, giving a review by the apostle of his service at Ephesus, where the Lord allowed him in his ministry to bring out all the truth. And he goes over it, not only emphasising that he had ministered in a constructive way, but emphasising also that he had moved in love, and places on the elders the responsibility to care for the saints and to remember the example of love which he had set. He commended them to God and the word of His grace, but reminded them too that the Holy Spirit Himself had set them as overseers. Paul is an example to us, showing that if the saints are to be built up, they must be cared for with unceasing love, and also we must be concerned as to constructive ministry. And then finally chapter 21 shows how all the saints are brought into the matter and how the Spirit is there among the brethren. The disciples told Paul by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. It indicates too, I suppose, although one would speak carefully as to it, that perhaps at this particular point Paul was lacking in sensitiveness, so that he failed to discern that what they had said to him was by the Spirit. And hence it emphasises the great need for sensitiveness if the things of God are to be carried through, as they are being carried through in the Spirit.

RS Does it show liberty in the Spirit, that Agabus knowing who Paul was, as such a vessel, that he would speak to him?

AJG Quite so. And he says, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit." He had no doubt as to what he has to say, and that it had been given to him by the Spirit.

LBl We reached a point this morning when Peter was brought to God's sovereignty, Jesus being Lord of all things, Gentile and Jew, as the footnote says, but now we have here the Spirit forbidding the apostle to speak in Asia, what would that suggest? Macedonia must be first?

AJG That is very interesting. While there is at first the word, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16: 15), yet when it comes to the actual working out of a commission to serve, the servant has to maintain subjection of spirit and sensitiveness as to what may be the Lord's will or the mind of the Spirit at any particular time. So it says, "And having passed through Phrygia and the Galatian country, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia," that is, the Holy Spirit evidently spoke authoritatively to Paul, whether inwardly or whether by someone we are not told, but the Holy Spirit it says, forbade them to speak the word in Asia, but did not direct them exactly where to go; He left them still dependent, only they were not to go in a certain direction. And then it says, "Having come down to Mysia; they attempted to go to Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them." That I take it is not the specific word by the Holy Spirit, but

the Spirit of Jesus, implying that the apostle, no doubt helped on by the exercise of having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in a certain direction, is more than ever dependent. The Spirit of Jesus would be the spirit of dependence. And the Spirit of Jesus would not allow him, that is, moving dependently, he was not free in his spirit, and therefore he was still left waiting, left undecided, where to go. "And having passed by Mysia they descended to Troas," and then he receives a vision, and then it says, "immediately we sought to go forth to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to announce to them the glad tidings." That is, he came to a certain conclusion, as weighing up all the preceding incidents.

HN The feature of sensitiveness, is it normal to all saints?

AJG I think it is normal Christianity because the Holy Spirit indwells believers, and the Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture as a dove, which is intended to impress us with the idea of great sensitiveness, but as to whether it actually marks us all is another matter.

HN Would you connect it too with circumcision and the fruit of that?

AJG Circumcision you mean, in a spiritual sense? Quite so, the cutting off of the flesh.

MSS Would John's word as to the unction be much on the same line? "Ye have the unction from the Holy One and ye know all things," implying that the saints are sensitive as to right and wrong?

AJG The unction is specially connected with the thought of intelligence in divine things. "Ye have the unction from the Holy One and ye know all things, ...and ye have not need that any one should teach you." It is more a question of the truth in relation to the unction.

HN You would connect hearing with this thought of sensitiveness? And nearness to the Lord?

AJG Well, quite so. You do not always know all at once where you are going, or whether what you may have in mind to do is the Lord's mind, but you are dependent. You have a mind of your own, and you get to the Lord about it, you move subjectly, prepared to have your plans or thoughts altered if it is the Lord's mind: and things gradually become more and more confirmed to you. I think that is the way it works practically.

RS Does it not work the same way as to what we are to have at a certain season, even when you have some sense as to where you are going?

AJG Yes, it does indeed.

AAT Philippi is on the border of Europe, is it not? So that this is God entering into the European territory?

AJG Yes, although of course, after this Paul did go back to Asia. That is, the Spirit did not forbid him never again to go to Asia, because it was after this that he went to Ephesus, which is in Asia. So that this being forbidden to speak the word in Asia, was not, so to speak, final, that he was never again to go there, it was just the mind of the Spirit for the moment.

WSW And possibly Asia was not ready for it yet?

AJG Well, possibly the Lord had in mind something else. He was going to invade Europe, and that is what it meant, Philippi was a colony, that is to say, an integral part of the Roman Empire, the citizens of Philippi having the rights of Roman citizens, and therefore it suggested the power of the Roman Empire, and God was going to invade it, with a view to establishing His testimony, as He has done, in the western world, and what has developed out of the western world.

WSW Would you say then the gospel has come to us from that point?

AJG Yes, I think so.

RS Is it that the Roman Empire, strong as it was, was unable to hinder the testimony from entering into it?

AJG I think so. The jail and the inner prison and the stocks and all that were the power of the Roman Empire, and all that was just set aside in a moment by an earthquake, and also by the spiritual power of Paul and Silas, that they could not be overcome, although they were put into prison.

AY I wanted to ask if you did not think that the Spirit saw there was something to be accomplished immediately in Philippi? As a result of the opposition of Satan and the vessel of testimony being cast into prison, what happened was that the Roman Empire was utterly defeated and the assembly was brought to light at Philippi, in the jailer and his house.

AJG Yes, I think so. The jailer was the representative of the power of the Empire and he was converted, and the magistrates were made to come and ask the servants to go. So that the supremacy of the testimony was shown in a remarkable way, and the assembly of the Philippians became an assembly of great spiritual wealth and power, having its beginnings in Lydia's house and then also in the house of the jailer.

AT You referred to the Spirit of Jesus. Would you say the Spirit is introducing *that* spirit now in the believer?

AJG Well, that is what He has in mind. It is interesting how the Holy Spirit will take on different characters. We have "*The* Spirit," or the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of Christ, or the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of God's Son - the Holy Spirit is ready to take on various characters in order to produce different results.

MSS Would the Spirit of Jesus be a peculiarly sensitive title - The Spirit of *that* Man?

AJG That is what I thought, particularly dependent. We were referring to Psalm 16, and the first feature brought out in this Psalm is dependence, "Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust," and that is to characterise and preserve us in our movements. So the Spirit of Jesus does not allow them. Paul had to wait some time before he got positive direction. First of all his directions are negative, not to go in certain directions, but it is not yet a positive direction where to go. And then he is given the vision, and he concludes that the Lord had called him to go to Macedonia.

AAT I do not think it is looked upon as a very happy thing to accept invitations six months ahead.

AJG Well, I suppose all that is a matter of the servant's own exercise before the Lord, as to whether or not he is free to accept invitations a long way ahead. We do get in 1 Corinthians 16, that Paul had certain plans at a considerable distance ahead, but all would be with him, subject to the Lord's will, of course. So in general, I think, dependence would perhaps prevent us from going too far ahead in our commitments.

RS But then sometimes we learn that servants whom we would like to have have so many commitments that we would not know where we were if we were not to invite them a long way ahead.

AJG Well, all that increases the exercise, I think. And while we do not want to get involved in things, we do not want to get too systematic. The great thing is to maintain balance and learning the reality of dependence.

HEB How is the thought of a vision to be associated with the activities of the Spirit and His direction?

AJG The vision is not exactly attributed to the Spirit. It says, "A vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a certain Macedonian man standing and beseeching him, and saying, Pass over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision immediately we sought to go forth to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to announce to them the glad tidings." So the vision was given, I suppose, by the Lord.

LAC Would there be here an encouragement, in general, to move with what we know to be right and then look for divine support and guidance, rather than to delay as a result of looking for direction and never receiving it?

AJG I think that is the way. As we read through the Acts and other scriptures carefully, I think we see that servants move, not necessarily always with specific direction, but they move very much according to their own judgment, but of course dependent and ready to be directed otherwise if it be not the Lord's will, they have no will in the matter. They either get confirmed or they get directed elsewhere. Sometimes they get confirmed, sometimes they get their thoughts changed. It is a question of being subject.

LBl Hence you would say the importance of servants holding themselves available?

AJG Yes. Here is says, Concluding that the Lord had called them to go there, that is there was a reasonable weighing up of things, and they made that decision.

RS Does the vision imply that his way was not perfectly clear but he had his eyes opened somewhat?

AJG Yes, I think so.

HLH In the case of Peter we get the vision first and then the Spirit speaking after. Here it seems to be the reverse, we get indications of the Spirit's mind first and then we get the vision.

AJG Yes, quite so. That just shows that we are not allowed in Christianity to have a fixed way of going on. It is a question of the Spirit all the way through, and that makes things living on His side and of course on ours, if we are subject, but it enforces dependence and sensitiveness on our part.

LAC Are you indicating that these things apply in the sphere where the Spirit's authority must be recognised, but can we understand these directions unless we enjoy communion with the Holy Spirit?

AJG No, I do not think we can.

CB Do you connect the sheet let down to Peter with this vision and move into Europe, having the nations in view?

AJG Well, to some extent, but not exclusively, because in Asia, and other parts some were of course converted from the nations, but at the same time, in God's ways, it seems that the testimony has developed in Europe and the western world which has come out of Europe, and that has to be recognised. It is just sovereignty, and where God has placed the treasure.

JJ The testimony then was going forward in the house of Lydia and the Philippian jailer?

AJG Yes, undoubtedly. The house of Lydia was the great centre, so to speak, the Lord put it into her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul and then she having been baptised and her house, she says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there."

And after they were released from the prison, they went to the house of Lydia. So that Lydia's house evidently was a kind of centre secured by the Lord - a centre of operations, and the jailer's house was an additional support to it.

JJ There was no synagogue at Philippi.

AJG That is right, there was no synagogue at Philippi as far as we can see.

VB I was wondering what you would say about this feature of prayer that was seen by the apostles first at the riverside?

AJG That shows that God had been before them, but that is always necessary. "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God." God always has to go before, and the fact that there were women who were godly, and prayed by the riverside, would assure Paul that there was a work there that he could link on with.

RS Is not that apparent even in the way Paul got the vision, a man in Macedonia crying out for help?

AJG Yes, quite so. It has often been remarked that he saw a man in the vision, but when he got there he only found women at first, but then eventually the man came to light in the jailer.

HEB And if we recognise the Spirit's activities and the sensitiveness that is proper we may expect a vision?

AJG Well, we may expect guidance, not necessarily in the form of a vision.

HEB No, I only mean what a vision would suggest in our day.

AJG Yes, getting clear as to what we should do.

RAE Is it not very important to have the mind of the Spirit, the Spirit's guidance, and not to be too much governed by circumstances? If Paul had been too much governed by circumstances he would have been discouraged when things turned out as they did in Philippi, would he not?

AJG Quite so.

WSW What does the river suggest in Acts 16? Does it refer to the Spirit?

AJG I think it is an allusion to the Holy Spirit. It was outside the city too.

JHH The vision appearing to Paul. Would there be the recognition of the principle of leadership in that. In verse 10, "And when *he* had seen the vision, immediately *we* sought to go forth." Would you say that if the Lord is pleased to give light to any leader amongst us that the saints should be ready to take it on in that way? It says, *Immediately* we sought to go forth.

AJG Well, quite so. And that seems to be the point at which Luke joins Paul. Up to verse 8, Luke, who is the writer, says "they," but when we come to verse 10, it says, "*We* sought to go forth to Macedonia," so apparently it was at this point that Luke joined him.

MSS Have you any thought about their *descending* to Troas?

AJG You mean that there was some moral suggestion in that. That they were going down. Is that what you had in mind?

MSS I wondered that.

AJG Well, very likely. The exercises that had gone before were likely to produce that kind of spirit. Now in chapter 20, which is one of the most important passages in the book, we have Paul, aware that his service at Ephesus had come to an end and that he would not see the saints there again, sends from Miletus to Ephesus and brings the elders of the assembly to him there. That is, in one sense it is a local position that is in mind, that is, the elders of a particular assembly, but they are brought out of their local setting so that what is ministered is really applicable to any assembly. Only at Ephesus, apparently, Paul was allowed to carry his ministry from the very earliest point, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, right up to announcing the whole counsel of God. So the whole scope of his ministry had come out at Ephesus, and he reminds the elders of it. But he also reminds them of what he had been among them in love, in self-denying service to them from house to house and with tears night and day, and so on.

MSS Would that help us in regard of being in line with what is universal?

AJG I think that is the idea, that we have here the whole scope of the truth covered in one particular assembly, and the charge is laid upon the elders, now Paul was to be no longer with them, to care for the saints and to care for the truth. But it really applies to every locality. Elders are a local thought, they are not gift, they are those who have moral weight and authority by reason of their experience with God, and they have the responsibility to care for the saints, and to care for what is of God in the place.

EB Caring for what is of God may cause us many a tear, but the Lord understands all about it.

AJG Exactly, and it is a question of love. "Hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us, and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives." It is a question of being formed in love.

HAL What do we learn from the fact that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city saying that bonds and tribulation await him, and yet he still goes forward.

AJG That was all right of course, it was right for him to go forward, not deterred by the fact that bonds and tribulations awaited him, because love will not be deterred by mere bonds and tribulations.

So that there was nothing wrong in that, but perhaps he might have taken it up before in exercise as to whether the Lord would have him go to Jerusalem, but still, the mere fact that testimony was rendered to him in every city that bonds and tribulations awaited him is no reason why he should have turned aside. Only the main point is that the Holy Spirit witnessed that in every city, showing that the truth had taken shape and in every local assembly the Holy Spirit was free to speak.

AY Paul said in another instance that he was not only ready to suffer but to die. So you would say nothing would deter him from what was before him in relation to the service to which he had been called by the Holy Spirit.

AJG Quite so, he says that in verse 13, of chapter 21, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So that is all right so far, that is love - laying down his life for the brethren, or the readiness to do it. But then all that has to be regulated by the Lord's will and the mind of the Spirit. And it is clear in chapter 21, that the Spirit did cause His mind in the matter to be expressed, and that Paul failed to recognise that it was the voice of the Spirit.

BA Would you say that the apostle was marked by the Spirit of Christ?

AJG Quite so. We see perfection in Christ, and we see in Paul a very large measure of formation after Christ, but just a measure of weakness at certain times. We have to speak diffidently, because he is so much above any of us, but still that is what we are allowed to see, I think.

JS It is remarkable that Paul says he took no account of himself.

AJG Well, exactly, his life was just something to be used, but he says in Philippians, his earnest expectation and hope was that in nothing he should be

ashamed, but whether by life or by death Christ should be magnified in his body.

HLH Paul refers to finishing his course in the ministry that he had had from the Lord Jesus, that was what was before him?

AJG Yes. The authorised version says, "Finish his course with joy," but joy is not the point, the point is to *finish* the work. That is what the Lord said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to *finish* his work."

HLH The bonds and tribulations did not divert him from his purpose to finish his course?

AJG That is what I thought.

MC The apostle's spirit was in accord with what God had in mind, and testified by the Spirit, that bonds and tribulations awaited him, but he goes forward.

AJG Yes, he was bound in spirit. Maybe he did not interpret it rightly as to why he was thus bound in spirit.

TG He said he had not kept back anything that was profitable.

AJG I think it is a good thing to notice the features of the teaching that he indicates, for they are really constructive, which is an important thing in ministry, that having regard to the conditions existing in a locality there should be what is orderly in the opening up of the truth. So that he speaks first of all of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and then he speaks of the gospel of the grace of God, and then he speaks of the kingdom of God, and then he speaks of the whole counsel of God. So all that he had covered in his ministry. It shows that there ought to be a measure of discernment as to the particular need. It is no use bringing in the greatest features of the truth if the saints are not established in the more fundamental features. They need the fundamental features before they can move on to that which is greater.

RS Then would you say there will never be a time in the history of the assembly when the whole circle of the truth will not be needed?

AJG I am sure of that, and so we get the example in Samuel, that he went round in a circuit from year to year. He went round to Bethel, and to Gilgal and Mizpah and then he came back to Ramah where he had an altar, but he went round that circuit year after year. So he recognised that the saints would need to go over the truth from time to time. And so with us, for there are always young ones coming on.

VB And so Paul found it necessary to teach from house to house. The necessity for entering into the houses of the saints in order to help them in the truth.

AJG Well, that is an important matter that perhaps we do not give sufficient attention to, that is the question of from house to house, that is, how much opportunity is taken of visiting the saints. Not in an official way, of course, but there is the personal contacts in our homes.

RS Is it to be noted that while he had not kept back anything from them at Ephesus that was profitable, yet he calls the elders over to Miletus and encourages them to take care of the flock?

AJG That is a most important thing, because Paul could not remain with them all the time, and any whom the Lord fits to minister the truth cannot remain all the time, so the responsibility rests on the elders, that they should care for the interests of the Lord in a locality and care for the saints.

RAE This matter of ministry, of the whole scope of the truth being covered, it would not be the idea of specialising, that certain of those who minister would have one line and certain another, but all would seek to be available for whatever might be needed?

AJG Well, I think that is more the thought. It is not to be expected that the Lord would have specialists in the ministry, it is really the work of the Holy Spirit, and He knows what is needed, but repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, while it might be thought that is just the initial thing that you present to the unbeliever, is really a kind of basic idea that runs right through. The repentance is towards God, God is before us, and faith is towards our Lord Jesus Christ, there is another Man before us. So that it is a basic principle that we have to maintain in our souls all the way through.

MSS Why does he say he is clean from the blood of all?

AJG Oh, because he had not failed to declare unto them all the counsel of God, I think.

CB When he says, I have *shown* you all things, does that correspond with what is said in the beginning of the Acts. The things that Jesus began both to *do* and to teach? There would be that corresponding with Paul?

AJG I am sure that is right. "I have showed you all things," is evidently that Paul had shown them by example. So he says, "These hands," holding up his hands, showing how he had served them by example.

AAT From a doctrinal standpoint, I suppose they were fairly well established, but do we not learn from the letter to Ephesus in Revelation that they had one defect, they had left their first love?

AJG Well, later on, I suppose. I do not know that that state applies here at this time. Certainly it took place not long after, but they *had* been established, I suppose, in moral correspondence with the truth, because in the Lord's word to the assembly at Ephesus in Revelation He says, "Remember, therefore, *whence* thou art fallen," so they had been at a top point, so to speak.

EB Would not what the apostle Paul says here, that he had not failed to bring to them all that was profitable, depend on how he had followed things up in the power of the Spirit?

AJG Well it would, of course. A brother, as far as I know, does not know beforehand, or not long beforehand, what he is going to bring out in a place, and if he remains in that place a long while what he brings out over that period will be the result of the Lord's knowledge, or the Spirit's knowledge, of what the needs of the saints are.

MSS The thought of "not shrinking," would that mean that conflict is involved in the service?

AJG Evidently. He is referring to the opposition of the Jews. He says in verse 19, "Serving the Lord with all lowliness, and tears, and temptations, which happened to me through the plots of the Jews." And then of course, sometimes even among the saints opposition may be encountered if the truth is not palatable.

MSS I was thinking of what he says in the end of Ephesians about spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies, whether that would come into the thought of opposition?

AJG It does. Anyone who has been brought up in the accredited systems of men is under the authority of darkness. What is taught in those systems has a certain authority attaching to it, but it is the authority of darkness, and it is a most difficult thing to deliver people from it.

EB You referred to the truth being unpalatable. Do you mean with those who are not ready for it, or oppose it?

AJG Well, sometimes to unspiritual persons the truth may be unpalatable because it cuts across what they may have been cherishing or going on with. It was very unpalatable to Saul when Samuel came and hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord, because he had spared him.

HLH What would the preaching of the kingdom of God involve?

AJG I think that would involve the subjective side of the truth. First repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and then there is the preaching of the grace of God, which would deliver from all legality. It would be like the truth of Galatians, to bring before them sonship in all the glory of it as that which God has in His mind for us. But then we do want also the subjective conditions in keeping with it, and I think that is what the kingdom of God involves, because the kingdom of God really involved the sway of the Spirit over the soul.

HLH So Paul seemed to find particular pleasure in the saints, he refers to them as "ye all, among whom I have gone about," as those in keeping with the features of the kingdom; the subjective features of the truth were attractive to him and in this connection he speaks of their not seeing his face any more.

AJG Quite so.

VB Then after referring to all that he says, "Take heed therefore to yourselves." Do you think he places the responsibility therefore on the elders at Ephesus, in that connection?

AJG Exactly. I believe the Lord would exercise the brethren in every locality, especially those who have the character of elders, who have a certain measure of moral authority, by reason of their experience with God, that there must be a more definite acceptance of responsibility to care for the saints. And He would lay it upon the elder sisters too that they have responsibility, according to the epistle to Titus, to exemplify the truth before the younger ones, and to look after the younger ones in that way.

BA Do we not see how Paul admonishes them with tears, each one individually?

AJG Quite so. Each one of them, as though he had every brother and sister under his eye.

SP When this oversight is lacking, what is the outcome in relation to any locality?

AJG Well, I think there will be deterioration, and the enemy will get in in some way or another. He will always get in in some form or other.

HLH The reason for this injunction is that they would be attacked from outside, there would come in amongst them grievous wolves, would you say?

AJG Yes, exactly. "I know this, that there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them." Therefore, he says, "Watch!" That is a great word, Watch!

CM Paul was thinking of the flock, do you not think?

AJG Yes, and first of all he says, "Take heed therefore to yourselves," that is the first thing. That is what Paul said to Timothy, "Give heed to thyself and to teaching, continue in them; for doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee." So 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." A most extraordinary way of putting the truth, you might have expected him to say, Shepherd the flock, but he says, "Take heed to yourselves and to *all* the flock... to shepherd the assembly of God." He would set out the value of the assembly of God before the hearts of the elders, in order to give them an incentive to care for it.

RS Does it not involve that we are to set ourselves to these things, to be concerned about more care?

AJG I am sure of that, and then the need of prayer too to go along with it.

FHP Tears are mentioned twice.

AJG Yes, exactly, and night and day. Obviously he would not be visiting the saints in the night except in very exceptional circumstances, but I have no doubt he would pray in the night. I think we may conclude that his references to day and night would allude to his prayers as well as his service.

AKH Would that be borne out in the epistle? It says, that from the time he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus he had not ceased to give thanks, "making mention of you at my prayers."

AJG Yes, and we get many references to prayer in the epistle to the Ephesians.

AAT Is it not so, that eldership is a local idea?

AJG Yes, it is.

AAT Well, what about Peter, does he not speak of himself as an elder?

AJG Yes, he does. I suppose while it is quite clear that the responsibility of elders to exercise oversight is a local idea. Peter brings himself before us in his epistle as having that character, so as to encourage us by a good example. He obviously did not remain in one locality, but he cared for the saints.

RS Does it not imply that he must have been located somewhere?

AJG I suppose so. No doubt in the locality where he was he would have the same feelings of care for the saints.

LAC What is the difference between an elder and a shepherd?

AJG An elder has years, not necessarily a large number of years, but one who has years, who is not one of the younger ones, not a novice; but one who has experience with God and a measure of moral authority.

MSS The thought of teaching is connected with shepherding in Ephesians, would that suggest that a shepherd would have the ability to teach the saints, the two things going together as one gift?

AJG Yes.

RS Does not the teacher look at the saints as together, while a shepherd suggests individual contact?

AJG I think that would be the case in a general way.

SC We can only get the spirit of discernment by watching, can we?

AJG Well, watching, of course, has in mind that you should be able to discern, so that you would need the spirit of discernment, particularly in the way of anything that is being taught. It says, "From among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things, to draw away the disciples after them, Wherefore watch." That is, you have your eyes open as to what the trends are, and what it is that people are saying. If something is beginning to be taught in a locality that is not sound doctrine, well, you are not going to let it go on.

CB What we are to take on in watching is what was exemplified in Paul himself?

AJG I believe that is the importance of these matters, that while he does go over what he had taught, and it covers an immense scope, it was constructive and orderly, yet what he specially emphasises is what he had been himself among them and how he had laid himself out in love to serve the saints.

AT Would tears be the expression of feeling here?

AJG Well, quite so.

WH It says, "Serving the Lord with all lowliness." Would that not become the foundation for them that they would see the spirit in which the apostle had served them for those three years?

AJG Well, exactly, and Peter is on the same line, it is very interesting to see that Peter and Paul, though leading apostles, are the exemplification of lowliness, and they enjoin it, so that Peter says, "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder," and then he says, "Yea, *all* of you... be clothed with humility," elder and younger alike.

TG You think we have to be careful of serving because of necessity and not willingly?

AJG Well, here the apostle is stressing that he had served in love, and then, while he sets himself before them as an example, in order that they should not be left with the last impressions on their minds being of Paul, he finishes by saying, "And to remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is as though, while he is emphasising the thing in himself, he does not want himself to be the last impression left on their minds.

FM What is the thought of an inheritance among the sanctified?

AJG Well, the inheritance, I think, is what we enjoy together as saints, "Things... which God has prepared for them that love him." That is the inheritance, but it is to be enjoyed among the sanctified, that is, among the saints.

LAC In verse 24, the apostle speaks of having received the ministry from the Lord Jesus, is there such a thing as receiving ministry from the Holy Spirit, or is ministry or receiving of it, always referred to the Lord Jesus? He speaks also in Corinthians of what he had received from the Lord Jesus.

AJG Yes, I should think it is right to regard ministry as received from the Lord, but I do not know whether it is wise to draw too definite a line between the different divine Persons for they all work in accord, so that it is best to take it just as we find it in Scripture. The Lord is on high in supreme control, and the Spirit is here too working with us, so we can get a word from the Lord through the Spirit or perhaps from the Spirit Himself.

AT Is the word of His grace very comprehensive?

AJG Well, I think it is, because it is a dispensation of grace and so whatever he told them would be of that character - the word of His grace.

MSS "I commit you to God." Would that be the apostle's falling back on the faithfulness of God?

AJG Yes, quite so, there is no such thought, as was remarked this morning, of apostolic succession, what we are committed to really is God, and the Holy

Spirit is here, so that it says, "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock wherein the *Holy Spirit* has set you as overseers," the Spirit is in charge of the position, and if one brother who has served well as an elder is removed, the Spirit will see that the place is filled if there is exercise on the part of the saints. Of course, if there is carelessness and so on, He might not raise up anyone with the ability of a pastor to care.

CM The thought of "purchased with the blood of his own" was to show how dear the saints are to Christ?

AJG Yes, I think so, and to show how great the assembly is in the mind of God that He paid such a price to get it. "The assembly of God," he says, "which he has purchased with the blood of his own."

HEB So that with Paul it was not merely the carrying out of a commission, although he was personally commissioned, but it was more the feelings of Christ that entered into his ministry which afforded a balance, would you say?

AJG I am sure of that.

AY I was wondering if this expression of Paul's here, "I commit you to God," would be in any way linked with the Lord's prayer in John 17? In view of His going away and the sorrow that would fill the hearts of those whom He had drawn to Himself, He commits them into the Father's hands.

AJG Well, quite so.

RS The shepherding in Peter is more confined to the words "sheep" and "lambs," but here we get the shepherding of the assembly.

AJG Well, he had just referred to the flock, of course, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock" as though to emphasise that they need care, as a flock does, but then he brings forward the thought of the assembly in order to show how great the flock is, and of what value it is to God, so that he gives the elders an incentive to care for it.

EMe In reference to verse 19, the apostle Paul had the light of the assembly of God from the beginning at his conversion, "Why persecutest thou *me*," and then here it says, "serving the Lord with all lowliness," Would serving the saints be the same as serving the Lord?

AJG Well, it would. We serve Christ by caring for the saints. Abigail was attractive to David, and when he sent to take her as his wife, she says, "Let thy handmaid be a bondservant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." She was going to show her affection for David by washing the feet of his servants.

LBl I think what you said just now is very important, that if individuals in a locality are careless the Lord may not raise up an elder when one has been removed. Would you say the exercise in that is that we should watch all in the locality so that things may be living, and that all may be moving with Him in exercise in regard of the testimony?

AJG Oh, quite so. Then I think we referred this morning to what was said of Timothy, that he cared with genuine feeling how the saints were getting on. He was not told to do it, but he did it of himself, and I believe it is just that kind of thing that the Holy Spirit takes notice of and takes on, so to speak. Timothy was a young man and yet he cared with genuine feeling how the saints were getting on, and he would pray for them and visit them and so on; and doubtless by this means he became fitted in a more general way for the work of caring for the saints.

HEB Paul was himself an example, was he not, of what he was enjoining? He found Timothy a young man who was well reported of in the district, and it says, "him would Paul have go forth with him." So Paul in that way, built him up in view of his departure when things would be committed to him?

AJG Yes, I would say so.

HLH Now what about chapter 21? Have you anything to say about Tyre?

AJG It says in verse 4, "Having found out the disciples, we remained there seven days, who said to Paul by the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem." So there we have disciples in Tyre who have the mind of the Spirit, and can convey it to Paul, and the history shows that Paul disregarded it. Not that he was deliberately disobedient, we would not think that for a moment, there is no ground for thinking it, yet we see he failed at that time to recognise that it was the voice of the Spirit, showing how sensitiveness is greatly needed with every one of us, even with a great servant like Paul. The disciples had the mind of the Spirit, just the local brethren, but they had the mind of the Spirit. And then it says, "When we had completed the days, we set out and took our journey, all of them accompanying us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And kneeling down upon the shore we prayed." That is the whole company, not the brothers only, or not the brothers and sisters only, but the children as well, wholly committed to the testimony; the children brought up to have an interest in it and to be with their parents in relation to it.

RAE Is there any significance in the thought that these disciples were at Tyre?

AJG You were thinking of Tyre representing what is commercial?

RAE Yes, I was thinking that the Lord's mind is that our occupations should not hinder us from this great feature of having the Spirit's mind in our locality.

AJG I think that is right, and the Lord had disciples, that is, He had true believers, what Scripture terms believers, in Tyre, in the midst of the commercial world, which is an important matter. Rome has established monasteries and all that kind of thing, a certain outward withdrawal from the world around them, but the thought is that we move amongst men, in the Spirit's power, so that the testimony of divine grace should reach them.

LAC Is it not very helpful to recognise the full authority given to the Spirit in that way?

AJG Well, I am sure of that. The Spirit is here to carry things through. It says, "He shall guide you into all the truth." So that notwithstanding all that has come in in the way of opposition, there is no reason why we should not come into all the truth. Those who are available to the Spirit will come into it.

FAITHFULNESS TO GOD

Esther 2:5-7; Esther 2:15-23; Esther 3:1-7; Esther 4:1-3

AJG I suppose we always need to remember, in reading the Old Testament, what is said in Romans 15, that whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning. It only emphasises how great is this period, in which the assembly is being formed, that God has gone to such pains, all through Old Testament times, to work out in the lives of people and to record in His word things that are intended for *our* instruction. And I believe this book has a particular voice to us at the present time, having in mind the development in the saints of faithfulness to God, as seen in Mordecai, faithfulness to God and His rights, in the presence of increasing evil, and also the development in the saints of the feminine features of beauty and moral attractiveness as seen in Esther, with a view to their having power with God. As evil increases and the opposition to the truth increases, what God wants, I believe, is that we should have power with Him. He can do things and come in, if necessary, apart from the saints, but He loves to bring us into intelligent sympathy with Himself as to matters: to have His own feelings as to them, and to *ask*, the Lord making much of asking the Father in His name in John 15 and 16. Mordecai is to be regarded sometimes of course, as a type of Christ Himself, but also as a type of spiritual manhood in the saints. So that in chapter 9, he is called the "man" Mordecai, and he became continually greater. Where the Spirit of God says, "the man" - "the man Moses," or "the man Mordecai," and so on, He is stressing, I think, spiritual manhood. And then he is also a Jew, several times he is called *the* Jew, and I think that is to stress genuineness, according to Romans 2,

where it says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, ...but he is a Jew who is so inwardly." So the stress on "the Jew" and then "the people of Mordecai," is to stress, I think, that what God is looking for is genuineness in the saints as over against the insubjection seen in the professing church as typified in Vashti. As the history develops, as we know, we find that evil is allowed to raise its head, with the express purpose, as we read in chapter 3, of destroying *all* the Jews that were in all the kingdom of Ahasuerus. That is to say, it contemplates that there will be as we can easily see working in the world at the present time, a deliberate effort on the part of the enemy to get rid of all that is genuine. But it is a question of how the matter is to be met, and for the meeting of it, God, I believe, would secure, besides genuineness, which is basic, these two features in the saints, first, fidelity to God and His throne at all costs, and then along with that, the development of feminine features proper to the assembly, features of beauty and moral attractiveness,

with the end in view that we should have power with God, as Esther eventually had with the king.

ELE Would you tell us why the name of God, in the ordinary form as we are accustomed to seeing it, is not found in this book?

AJG I believe it is to impress that character upon the book, that it is a question of the workings in an unseen way of evil on the one hand, but of God operating also in an unseen way against it, but operating in answer to the exercises of the saints and not without them.

JHH Did you have Isaac in mind? It says, "The man became great, and he became continually greater, until he was very great," Genesis 26: 13.

AJG Yes, he is an example of that very thing. We get "the man Moses," and we get Isaac spoken of in that way as *the* man, and you get Mordecai,

the man Mordecai became continually greater (chapter 9: 4). So that where Scripture speaks of someone in that way, as *the* man, I believe it is stressing features of manhood.

RAE Would Mordecai and Esther taken together, bring before us what was mentioned in your prayer, as to the difficulties which the saints have to encounter all being used to form us according to the mind of God?

AJG That is exactly what I had in mind. And one has been impressed with the fact that not only did sin enter into the world, by man, but before that sin entered into the universe through the fall of Satan and his angels, and I believe the challenge that has constituted to God's throne is being taken up by God in the assembly. I believe He intends to secure in the assembly, in the presence of the evil, a sphere where He can see every right of His maintained and every feature that is pleasing to Him secured. And then, not only will He take up the challenge and meet it fully, so that He is glorified in relation to it, but by the very exercises through which these results are secured. He forms the vessel that has been in His mind from eternity. Because obviously if the assembly is to be the helpmeet for Christ she must be holy, she must have holy sensibilities and intelligence in judgment. No mere innocent vessel would do, she must be a holy vessel. And the work of formation that goes on, corresponding with the building of the woman, I believe is very largely through the exercises caused by our being in the presence of evil.

ELE So you mentioned in your prayer about the ways of God.

AJG Quite so.

MSS Is that the way the all various wisdom of God is made known in the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies?

AJG Well, in one way, I think. Especially as they see how matters are dealt with in the assembly; in the history of the assembly Satan has sought to introduce every kind of evil, and in the assembly principalities and powers see how it is met in wisdom. And then also how God can turn other things to account. Take the war and all that it resulted in instead of its overcoming the saints, it was used to make them more devoted to God and His service, and less held by things that the war could rob them of, and in all that there is brought to light before principalities and powers in the heavenlies, the all various wisdom of God, that He cannot be overcome by evil, but uses evil to the furtherance of His own ends. That must be a great education to the angels.

RS It says, the wrath of man would praise Him and the remainder He would restrain.

AJG Exactly.

LAC Haman was an Amalekite, but would it not be here particularly to show the attack of the enemy and the full end which he has in mind in attacking the saints?

AJG Yes, I think so. It is very significant that we are told quite clearly, that Haman scorned to lay hands on Mordecai alone, he sought to destroy *all* the Jews. Bearing in mind that the Jew represents what is genuine, "he is a Jew who is one inwardly," you can see that that is a kind of indication of what I believe is already working, that Satan is planning to bring about conditions amongst men in the world which would make it impossible for the saints to live and at the same time maintain what is due to God. So you get in the first month, that is the month Nisan, they cast Pur, that is the lot, and that is just to remind us, that whatever Satan does in his planning, it is all in the hands of the Lord. The lot is cast in the lap, but the decision is with Jehovah, it says, so that is just to remind us that while there is no doubt that we are in the presence of Satan's plotting against the saints, though we may not be aware of the detail of it, the matter is actually in the hands of the Lord.

AAT Is it not so that it is a greater thing to be in this present period than to be in a day when there is no evil?

AJG I think it is. It is a day of formation. Of course it is not as great as eternity will be, and when the Lord takes us to be with Himself, the heavenly saints enter into their eternal portion already, although the millennium has not yet come in, but so far as the heavenly saints are concerned, we enter at

once, I suppose, upon our heavenly condition and portion. In the millennium we shall have a heavenly place in relation to the earth, but in the millennium God will work out on the earth what He can do in men of flesh and blood.

ELE Would you say the question of good and evil will be solved then? It will be shown then that God can bring about the good and suppress evil?

AJG Yes, it will be demonstrated on the earth, that God can do that, that He can keep evil in check and make good reign, and bless men. But then it will not change the heart of man, so that what happens at the end of the millennium shows that the heart of man is unchanged unless God work in him.

CB The Lord is referred to as "The faithful and true witness." Would you say the enemy is against those features in the saints?

AJG Yes, I think so. So that we start with this position of insubjection on the part of the queen, which, I suppose, is a figure of the state of insubjection to Christ that marks the church publicly; and it is in that setting that God is working, you might say, secretly, among the saints, to secure an answer to His thoughts.

MSS In that connection, it is not so much the relation of the bride to Christ which is in view in this book, as the delight which God has in the feminine features?

AJG Yes, I think that is it. You could not say that it is the assembly viewed as the bride of Christ, but it is rather the assembly, as learning from Christ by the Spirit, taking on feminine features that are pleasing to God, and doing it now so that we may have power with God. The Lord says, "If *ye* abide in me," and that would result in the features of Christ being formed in us, "and my words abide in you," that would result in our becoming intelligent, "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you." It shows what possibilities there are if only we can develop in the features of moral attractiveness and intelligence that are contemplated.

MSS When you speak of power with God, have you in mind that there are features in the saints that call for and warrant God's answer to their prayers?

AJG That is the point, that we should seek to develop in those features. And there are conditions in the world, and they will develop more and more, that require that the saints should get to God in supplication, but then the point is that we must acquire the features that will give us power with God.

HN Have you in mind the thought of discipline entering into this?

AJG Well, yes, that is part of what God uses in formation.

LAC Are you viewing both Mordecai and Esther as types of the believer here?

AJG I think we have to bear in mind that from time to time, Mordecai rises to a type of Christ, but on the other hand there is no doubt that he also represents features of manhood in the saints, particularly the feature of being faithful to God's rights, he is sitting in the gate; that is, a place of judgment according to God, and nothing will turn him from that, even after he is led in triumph through the city as the man whom the king delights to honour, he returns to the king's gate.

LAC I was wondering whether Mordecai, as occupying here the more exposed position, might not represent some of our brethren at present, who are being brought, more or less, to the front and are being greatly harassed by the enemy? Whereas Esther occupies more the position of those of us who can be serving by prayer in secret?

AJG Well, quite so.

RS But the threat is against *all* the Jews.

AJG *All* the Jews. I believe that is the first thing to keep in mind; it says that there was in Shushan, the fortress, a certain Jew, it is the fact that he is a Jew that is so much stressed. And then in chapter 3: 4, it says that Mordecai "had told them that he was a Jew." And then later on we get him spoken of as Mordecai - *the* Jew; see chapter 5: 13; 6: 10; 8: 7, etc. So that it is the great thought of what is inward and genuine, and the hostility was against *all* that bore that character.

AT Would you say recovery was not in the Jew so much, but in Mordecai?

AJG Well, he is called Mordecai the Jew, that is what he was, a Jew, and that is intended to convey this thought of what we are inwardly. It means what we really are, not what we pretend or might appear to be. But then there were the people of Mordecai. It says, "Haman sought to destroy *all* the Jews that were in all the kingdom of Ahasuerus, the people of Mordecai." That is, it is the saints viewed as having that character.

CM Would Mordecai and those with him be viewed as a remnant?

AJG Well, yes, I suppose so. But then we have often been told, that the idea of a remnant really is all that is real in the midst of mere profession, but there may be many who are real at bottom who are not as yet answering to this description of being thoroughly genuine in the things of God, but that is what God has in mind.

AC Would Mordecai owning himself as a Jew be associated with the confessing of the Lord's name?

AJG Well, it would involve that, definitely. I think it involves truth in the inward parts, and being governed by the truth thoroughly.

SP You spoke just now of the feminine features which are to be seen practically in this day. Would you say a little more about that?

AJG It says in chapter 2: 7, "He," that is Mordecai, "brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother - and the maiden was fair and beautiful." And then it is a question of her being brought under the care of Hegai, who, I have no doubt, is a type of the Spirit; and what he did for her and with her. And then we read in verse 15, that when the turn came for Esther to go in, "she required nothing but what Hegai, the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained grace in the sight of all them that saw her." So first of all she is brought up by Mordecai, which suggests the saints as held and formed under the influence of Christ, learning from Christ: for features of beauty and moral attractiveness can really only be learned from Christ although they are formed femininely in us. They can only be learned in Him. And then the Spirit will take on the work to add refinement to it. There is not only what she was as a virgin; that is, preserved uncorrupted by the world; but she is beautiful, which, I suppose, is what all the saints are as subjects of the work of God; but then she had to be trained under Mordecai first, and then to come under the custody of Hegai with a view to special beautification and refinement.

SP Would you say that is what the Spirit is doing at the present moment amongst the saints?

AJG I think so.

CM What would be the spiritual significance of not having father or mother?

AJG I suppose it would mean that she is no longer under the influence of what is natural, so that she might be held under the influence of Mordecai.

MSS The thought of purification is prominent. It says, that Hegai "speedily gave her her things for purification." Would that suggest the service of the Spirit to us in connection with moral exercises?

AJG I would think so. And then certain other positive features, six months with oil and myrrh and six months with spices, but it has to be borne in mind, that the great end in view is to make her acceptable to the king. It is a question of what will really make us acceptable to God.

AAT There is a scripture in Revelation 21, "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Would that correspond?

AJG I think so. The Spirit is occupied with the bride, and one great thought, I think, connected with the bride, is adornment. It says in Isaiah 61: 10, "As a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." We can easily understand that the idea of a bride is that she wants to look her very best. She will have special clothing for the occasion, and she will consider what the Bridegroom would like to see her in; and then in addition to the clothing, she will put on her jewels. I am not suggesting, of course, that the saints today in their marriages will go in for fine clothing or jewels, I am only taking up the figure, that that is the idea. It is the suggestion of her spiritual refinement and adornment.

CB Do you think that in that way Timothy was under Paul's influence on this line? He says, "Keep thyself pure."

AJG Well, yes, but I think it goes further than keeping ourselves pure. You see, we might be faithful to the Lord, and yet we might not exactly be much formed under His influence so as to take on His features. The Lord says, "Learn from me," and there are certain features that are the fruit of the Spirit.

RAE Is it remarkable that in verse 20, it says, "And Esther did what Mordecai told her, like as when she was brought up with him. Whatever development there is with her, that position is not departed from?

AJG Yes. That is very good.

EB Learn from Him, would it mean that those features that are seen in Him would be reproduced in us?

AJG Exactly. And that is exactly what the assembly as the bride is to be. She is to be a perfect answer to Christ, particularly in the features of moral beauty and adornment. As the wife it is more a question of fidelity to His interests, which of course, is a very great feature. But the bride contemplates features of special refinement and adornment. And all that is to correspond with Christ, so that God sees it for His pleasure in the assembly. It is the features of Christ formed femininely in the saints.

AAT I heard a remark the other day, which seemed to be new to me, that is that at the present moment the assembly is the "wife," but the future thought is the "bride." In natural things the bride is first and the wife comes afterwards.

AJG I think that is right, because the idea connected with the wife is, very largely, that she is faithful to her husband and his interests, and can be trusted

in his absence, and that is developed in a full life-sized picture, you might say, in the last chapter of Proverbs, in the woman of worth. She is immediately shown to be a wife, because it says, "The heart of her husband confideth in her."

MSS It says in chapter 2: 9, "And the maiden pleased him and obtained favour before him," speaking of Hegai. Would that suggest that it is possible for us not only to grieve the Spirit but to please the Spirit?

AJG I am sure of that, and that is a very important matter, because it is quite clear from Scripture that we can grieve the Spirit, for we are told not to. But if we can grieve the Spirit we can certainly please Him. There is what is grieving to Him and there is what is pleasing to Him.

ELE That shows the importance of reading the Scriptures and being able to see those things that are not actually put there in terms. If we can grieve the Spirit, therefore it must be possible to please Him.

AJG Quite so.

HLH So when the time came for her to go in, she required nothing.

AJG Nothing. And that is an important matter, that we really require nothing to make us pleasing to God, other than what the Spirit will produce in us. No natural energy or natural ability, natural forcefulness of character or anything of that sort, will commend us to God. It is a question of what is formed by the Spirit according to Christ.

HLH Would the sense of that give liberty? We have access by one Spirit, it says.

AJG Quite so. But I think it would exercise us greatly as to what kind of features we are cultivating, and whether we are on the lines on which the Spirit will help us.

VB What may we learn from Esther not making known her people nor her birth? Mordecai had charged her not to do so.

AJG It says in verse 10 of chapter 2, "Esther had not made known her people nor her birth, for Mordecai had charged her that she should not make it known." And then again in verse 20, we get, "As Mordecai had charged her, had not *yet* made known her birth nor her people, for Esther did what Mordecai told her, like as when she was brought up with him." That seems to contemplate that the time is to come when she *is* to make known her people, which she does, later on, but the time had not yet arrived for it. It may be that it is a question of coming a little more in accord with what we are as born of

God before we say too much about it. It is a question of the time coming when we have got to take a stand, and I believe God is doing it with the saints already. But that certainly raises a question as to whether we are equal to what we profess, because the world is very quick to see any disparity and to point it out.

VB Mordecai seemed to have known that, and he was careful that she should not do it. Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her. He was anxious to see those features formed in her, that she might be able to stand on her own feet, as we say.

AJG I believe that is it.

HLH The time came when Esther said, "If I perish, I perish." That was taking a stand, was it not?

AJG It was, exactly.

LAC In chapter 2: 16, there is the mention of the time when she is taken in to king Ahasuerus - in the tenth month, in the seventh year of his reign. Would the two numerals there suggest the responsibility on our side, and the completeness of what is in the mind of God from His side, coming together,

in our coming into conformity with what His mind about us is?

AJG That is probably right. She obtained grace and favour in his sight, even at this point, but then as things develop, although she has already obtained grace and favour in his sight, she has to take up further exercise as to being further pleasing to him, so as to acquire power with him.

SGH With reference to what you were saying as to the purification, there seems to be some connection with Ephesians 5: 26, 27, "In order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the assembly to himself glorious."

AJG Yes, there is a general correspondence there. The end in view there is that Christ should present the assembly to Himself glorious. Here it is more the king, which I suppose, would refer to God. But still there is the idea of being personally pleasing to Him: or if we regard it as a type of the assembly, pleasing, you might say, corporately.

SP You spoke about faithfulness to God. I wonder if you would say something about the time of Daniel, when those counsellors prevailed on the king to make a decree that no man was to make any petition to any god, but Daniel in

spite of all that prayed to his God three times a day. Would you say something more about the faithfulness of God as perhaps in a day like this?

AJG Well, that is very similar to what this book develops. That incident of Darius and his counsellors, is a picture of the position in the world today. Power is no longer in the hands of the sovereign, power is in the hands of his counsellors, parliament or whatever it might be, and that means that even the one whom God has established in the position of authority has to be regulated very much by the will of the people, which opens the door to any kind of opposition to the truth becoming legalised; and that is exactly what is developing in the world.

RS And as one step is downward, another is following downward, and Satan uses it against the saints?

AJG Exactly, that is just why we have to be on the watch, for it is Satan behind it, just as Haman cast the lot. It is a deliberate plotting of Satan against the saints, but we can take courage in the fact that the whole decision is of Jehovah, Proverbs 16: 33; on the other hand God will come in for His people as there are the moral conditions that He is looking for.

ELE So a very popular saying in the world is, government by the people for the people. That is not of God.

AJG No, it is not of God, it just opens the door for Satan to work on the people in opposition to what is of God.

RAE Following on what was remarked as to Esther being pleasing to the Spirit in type, it says in the end of that verse, "He removed her and her maids to the best place of the house of the women." Would you say something about that?

AJG Well, I am sure the more we are exercised to be pleasing to the Spirit, the more we shall find ourselves having the best portion. That is all I can say. But it is well to notice the incident at the end of chapter 2, because that comes in as indicating what marked Mordecai. It says in verse 19, "Mordecai *sat* in the king's gate," and then again in verse 21, "In those days *while* Mordecai sat in the king's gate" these two chamberlains plotted against the king, and the thing became known to Mordecai. So it is the suggestion of watchfulness amongst the saints, as seen in Mordecai, as to anything among themselves that is going to challenge God's rights. It became known to Mordecai and he related it to Esther the queen, that is, you might say, it is brought to the assembly and it is dealt with. Esther told it to the king in Mordecai's name. It is really dealt with in the Lord's name. The matter was investigated and the culprits were both hanged on a tree. So that it is a question of our developing in faithfulness to God in assembly exercises, and

that will develop a fibre that will help us in having to stand against what is public.

RS Is it not encouraging that in these days of evil developing and acquiring more power attention is being called more and more to the recognition of the Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so. And along with that the Lord is calling the attention of authorities and of men to the saints refusing to do certain things for conscience sake, but then that is a testimony to the rights of God, because if one says, I cannot do that, I belong to the Lord, I have a conscience about it, it is not simply the man's own rights, it is a question of God's rights, and that is what is being testified to in the world at the present time.

ELE Like the Trade Unions?

AJG Yes, exactly.

LBl Would you say then that when it is a question of faithfulness to God, that which belongs to God will be guarded?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that, but God would have the saints develop in it. The Lord has been supremely faithful to the rights of God, but now God is seeking to develop that same feature in the assembly, that she may *really* be the Lamb's wife. The Lamb is the One who suffered for the rights of God here, and His wife must take on similar features.

AT It says, Mordecai sat in the king's gate, and the husband of the woman of Proverbs is said to be known in the gates.

AJG Yes. The husband of the woman of worth is known in the gates. The gate, all through Scripture is the place where matters are dealt with and judged according to God, and Mordecai sitting in the gate, in its application to us, indicates that we are to take on that feature, particularly in matters that arise in the assembly, that we consider what is right in the sight of God, and do not allow ourselves to be influenced by natural relationships, or natural preferences or anything of that kind.

WH So it calls for faithfulness then in every circumstance of life?

AJG Quite so.

HAL So that we pray for deliverance but we may not always get it, but we stand faithful, is that the thought?

AJG That is the thought. Overcoming, which is such a great matter in John's writings, especially in Revelation, is not a matter of doing something heroic, overcoming is simply a matter of not surrendering anything that is due to God.

You just refuse to surrender. That is how the Lord overcame, He died rather than surrender anything that was right in the sight of God.

JHH Do we see that in Abraham, for God says of him, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice," Genesis 18: 19 Well, quite so. He commanded his children and his household after him, and that raises an important matter which we have not referred to, but it is significant to notice the last verse of chapter l. Following on the insubjection of the queen, the king made a decree "that every man should bear rule in his own house, and should speak according to the language of his people." So that is an important matter, showing that our exercises really have got to begin in our houses, and every one is to rule in his own house. That is, the man is to accept the position of headship in his house that God has given him, and to bring in divine principles as governing his house. And then he is to see that the language of his people is spoken, that is, he is not to allow the language of the world, he is of God, he is a heavenly person, and he is to see that what is proper to the Christian circle is seen in his own house. That is an important matter, because it is a little sphere of his own in which God disciplines him, and helps him to learn the value of divine principles and the support he gets as he stands by them. And then it also results in his household growing up as potential material for the assembly.

ELE Is that not also found in Nehemiah 13: 24, "And their children spoke half in the language of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people."

AJG Yes, exactly, that is the contrast to what God is looking for.

MSS Is there anything in the fact, that before this faithfulness of Mordecai in the end of chapter 2, it says in verse 19, "And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai sat in the king's gate." That is, virgin character is stressed, and the thought of being gathered together too as necessary preliminary to action in the assembly?

AJG That is very suggestive. It is remarkable that we do get in this book a certain suggestion of the increase of the feminine features. You get the seven maidens selected to be given her in chapter 2: 9, and then the virgins gathering together as you allude to. Attention has been drawn to the fact that in many scriptures in which a woman who typifies the assembly is presented, we get maids or virgins connected with her, as showing how God loves to accentuate the idea of the feminine features that He is working for. He has got the assembly before Him so much that He loves to suggest the idea of great increase in feminine features.

ELE Indeed. Is not that so in Psalm 45, the king's daughters and then the virgins. Companies of women are mentioned.

AJG Quite so, you get it there. And Rebecca had maids, and Abigail had damsels that followed her.

HAL And the spouse in the Song of Songs?

AJG Yes.

RS God has the Man already in perfection, but the thought now is to have the woman in moral correspondence?

AJG That is the idea.

AAT I notice that sometimes you emphasise the masculine, that is the man - the *man* Mordecai, and now you are emphasising the feminine. How do they balance?

AJG Well, of course, if we regard Mordecai as we may in certain settings as a type of Christ, there is no difficulty about the man. As our brother says, God has the Man in whom all that He looks for is found. But then the idea of the woman, or the feminine features, as we speak, is correspondence with that in the assembly. That is what I understand. Of course, if we regard Mordecai as a type of the saints, he represents more the element of responsibility and stands out publicly, while Esther would indicate more the subjective state that supports that.

WH Esther did what Mordecai had told her.

AJG Yes, that to us would refer primarily, I suppose, to subjection to Christ, but also, I think, it might refer to subjection to teaching in the assembly.

HOE And the Spirit's part brought in in Hegai, as all being in his custody. I was wondering whether the subjection of the assembly having the first place amongst the families would be seen in Esther and her women being given the chief place in the house?

AJG I should think very likely. It is remarkable what fulness you see in the Scriptures when once you begin to have the light of the assembly as governing the position.

MSS Would it be placed first not so much on account of the counsels of God but on moral grounds?

AJG I think that would be right.

RG Why is it that Mordecai bowed not to Haman?

AJG That was just that he was maintaining the rights of God, because Haman was an Amalekite, he was an Agagite. Agag is a title of the kings of Amalek. He was an Amalekite and God had said that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. God is never going to tolerate Amalek. And again in Deuteronomy 25: 17, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee on the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; how he met thee on the way" and so on, "and it shall be, when Jehovah thy God shall have given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land that Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens; thou shalt not forget it." Well, that had not been done, we know that Saul failed in that matter, but at any rate Mordecai was not forgetting it. He could not exactly blot out Haman, but he would not bow down to him, he would not recognise him at all, and in doing so he is going against the commandment of the king.

LAC Would this incident of personal faithfulness that has been referred to at the end of chapter 2, indicate to us that the testimony can only go forward and the local assembly conditions be maintained, where such personal faithfulness is found with us as set in the kingdom as true subjects?

AJG Yes. It is remarkable here that the king promoted Haman and makes this order, a suggestion, I believe, of the way that God will use evil. He will use the evil that is developing in the world, democracy and all that goes along with it, and will allow it to acquire a certain power, in order to use it for the development in the saints of what He has in mind to produce.

JHH Was that borne out in Job?

AJG You mean He commanded Satan? Yes, quite so.

MSS It says, "After these things," referring to the action of Mordecai. Would that suggest that there is that now in the saints which is to be tested.

AJG I think so. And He is going to develop it more and more.

HOE Does the thought of the mid-week meeting have a place in what we are saying? As cognisant of the evil that is in the world, and seeking to be faithful, and to be found here pleasing to the Lord and to the Spirit, we are together in a secret way to hold these things in fidelity, and in the middle of the week where we need help, it would serve to carry us on for the other half, as it were.

AJG Quite so.

EMs In chapter 3: 8, it speak of "a people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are

diverse from those of every people," and so on. Would that agree with our being a peculiar people?

AJG It would, and we are scattered abroad and dispersed. Wherever you go in the western world, and what has developed out of it, you will find true believers in all walks of life and all kinds of businesses and so on, and the world is all the time coming up against them, and God intends it should be so. But then Satan's effort is to get rid of *all*

the Jews. Wherever there is any genuineness he would like to get rid of it.

LAC It mentions here in the beginning of verse 4, "It came to pass as they spoke daily to him and he hearkened not to them," - I was wondering whether in addition to this widespread plan of the enemy, which has such far-reaching results in mind, Satan is not set on a constant and gradual and continual effort to break down the spiritual resistance of the saints, by continually harassing them in small matters?

AJG I believe that is so. Some brethren experience that kind of thing very much.

CB Would you say that in the ways of God it is allowed to appear as though evil is triumphing?

AJG It would look like that and yet it does not triumph. There is nothing so comforting as the sense that God controls evil and uses it just as much as He does good. But on the other hand He may allow evil to acquire more power than He would otherwise do, because of the state of the saints, because of our lack of watchfulness or lack of exercise.

ELE At the end we find the woman rides the beast.

AJG Yes, quite so. The woman rides the beast and then the beast overthrows the woman.

LBl Would you say then that this is very instructive for us, because we see Mordecai here in his faithfulness and over against that he is not promoted. So with individuals marked by faithfulness to God, it works out sometimes that there is no promotion or right of way for such, but rather an attack intended to discourage them?

AJG Quite so. Now we ought to read the first three verses of chapter 4, just to show how the matter is taken up feelingly. When Mordecai knows that the decree of the king had been signed, he "rent his garments, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry, and came even before the king's gate"; that is, we ought

to be on the watch as to what is going on in the world in so far as it effects the saints. And even if we ourselves are not affected by Trade Union persecution and other forms of the enemy's attacks, we should feel for and with those who are thus affected, and take it up with God feelingly.

RAE Would you say that while in a secret way we are to rely in our souls that God is going to eventually triumph and the testimony go through, yet, as these things arise we present right feelings to Him at the time about them?

AJG That is what is in mind, and the importance of it is confirmed by the end of chapter 9: 31, where it says, "To confirm these days of Purim in their fixed times, according as Mordecai the Jew and queen Esther had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, as to the matters of the fasting *and their cry*," as though God took special account of the cry, the feelings.

RS Would that remind us of Christ on the cross presenting a holy atonement to God? It was not only that He was suffering in judgment but He was presenting feelings proper to God in connection with the question of sin. Is not this feature of proper feelings one to be taken on by us?

AJG I have no doubt it is. It says, "By the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God," so the offering of Christ was marked by feelings that were of God.

ELE In this incident it looks as if Mordecai is weakening, he is sorrowing, and it might seem as if he was giving way, but he is feeling the thing before God, and the answer comes in from God.

AJG Yes, exactly.

CM What would be the meaning of putting on sackcloth and ashes?

AJG It was just an expression of really feeling things.

BA Do we not see the faithfulness of the saints commended in the book of Revelation, "Because thou hast a little power and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name," and so on?

AJG Yes, we do. Faithfulness is commended there, and there is the great answering recompense in the opening up of the truth, an opened door which none can shut.

MSS Would this lead us to be prepared for a general attack on the testimony publicly if the Lord leaves us here a little longer?

AJG I do not think there is any question that that is what Satan will do if he is permitted.

AT So Esther obeyed Mordecai and Mordecai was faithful in the position?

AJG Quite so.

THE GREATNESS OF WHAT IS IN CHRIST

Colossians 1: 11 - 23

AJG I thought this passage might give us an impression of the greatness of what we are called to have part in. It greatly stresses, as we know, the greatness of the Person of Christ, viewing Him in His glorious Manhood, so that the greatness of what has come in now in Man for the pleasure of God is opened out, the object of the epistle being partly to counter what was coming in, and what the Colossians were in danger of, that is, bringing in the thoughts of men, mere men, philosophy and so on, and in order to counteract that, the apostle, by the Spirit, enlarges on the greatness of Christ, and in the next chapter it says, "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This emphasizes His manhood, that it dwells *bodily*, and that we are complete in Him, that is, that the assembly has such a Head. But then also, the epistle is written in order to attract us to go over Jordan in our minds and affections, to find our life in what this epistle speaks of as "the things which are above." So that this chapter might be viewed as answering to the glory of the ark, and to the people having to have the ark clearly before them in its movements. There were to be two thousand cubits between it and them at first, in order to induce them to go forward and to go over Jordan. The two thousand cubits of course, did not remain, because actually the ark went into Jordan and remained in the bed of Jordan while all the people passed over. But at the first there was this distance of two thousand cubits in order that they might get a clear view of the ark in *its* movements. And I think that that is one thing that is in mind in the first two chapters of this epistle, this one specially emphasizing the greatness of Christ,

but also bringing in the great thought that He "is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead." He is the *beginning*, first-born from among the dead, and so everything for God begins with Christ in resurrection, or Christ the other side of death. But before the apostle begins to enlarge on the greatness of Christ he speaks about his care for the Colossians, and of course for us, that we might be strengthened with all power, according to the might of God's glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; "giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light," as though the sharing of the portion of the saints in light is one of the great means by which we are enabled to go on in all endurance and long suffering with joy. I am sure we prove that. And it seems to be suggested in this epistle, that the more we enter into our portion, the portion of the saints in light, the more we shall be strengthened unto all endurance and long suffering with joy. So, before the personal glory of Christ as Creator, and His glory in relation to all

things and in relation to the assembly, is brought in, His position in love is stressed, that we give thanks to the Father who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, as though the whole position is dominated by the light of love. The Father is the Source of it and the Son the Object of it, the Centre of the great system of love that is before God.

CBl Is the thought here connected with His greatness the same as His being the "beginning of the creation of God"?

AJG I am not quite sure whether it is the same thought altogether. The beginning of the creation of God would be, I suppose, that Christ was there at the beginning before God began to operate at all, and His operations had relation to Christ, but here He is definitely called, "The beginning, firstborn from among the dead," as though all that is being brought in for the pleasure of God begins with Christ beyond death.

CBl Is that the way the saints are brought into it?

AJG You mean by His death? Quite so, and I think it is important to realize this, that Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, firstborn stressing, of course, His personal pre-eminence in that position. But as we begin to touch our privilege as with Christ, at the Supper and in that which follows, we come to know Him in this light, and then it is a question of going forward. It is not a question of going back to occupation with the Lord in His pathway here, however precious that may be in other settings; but He is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead. So having come out from among the dead He will go forward, and will have us go forward with Him.

JS Would you say that as the "firstborn from among the dead" He has a race?

AJG A race of His own order? Yes, quite so. He is pre-eminent among them, but He has a race as you say. As it says, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die it abides alone, but if it die, it bears much fruit."

CC So in that relation you would say that it is the firstborn One and the firstborn ones?

AJG Yes. Christ must be firstborn in every position. Firstborn does not refer to time exactly but more to personal pre-eminence, as it says, "That He might have the first place in *all* things."

AC In connection with what you said about the distance, the two thousand cubits, would that speak of the greatness of Christ as the only One who could meet death in all its terror, to make a way through for His people?

AJG Yes, and in order too to give them a good view of the ark in its movements into death as setting aside the power of Jordan.

RS Would you not think that there was a goodly number going across the Jordan and therefore they would have to be a certain distance off in order to get a good view of the ark?

AJG Well, quite so, and one would link it in one's mind with what the Lord said to Peter in the end of John 13, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me after." The Lord had to go alone first, it was a question of going into death, but Peter and all His own should go that way afterwards and pass over.

EME Would you say a little more as to Him being the beginning of the creation? We have to keep in our minds that He forms no part of the creation.

AJG No. He forms no part of the creation, but in His grace He has taken a place in relation to the creation, the Creator has entered into the creation and taken a place in relation to it, and so He is necessarily firstborn of all creation because He is the Creator. That is how it reads here, "Firstborn of all creation, *because* by him were created all things" (verses 15 and 16).

AAT In Romans 8 it speaks of Him as the firstborn among many brethren, is that a more limited thought?

AJG Well, it would be limited to those of the assembly, I suppose, but even then He is firstborn, He is pre-eminent. I think that has in view the pleasure of God. It is a question of what God has predestinated, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. That is, God would have Christ in His pre-eminence before Him, but surrounded with many of His own order, all in sonship.

HAL Is that why you spoke of our being in love in this matter. There is a reference here to the "Son of his love," the Father has translated us. Is it to encourage us to go over?

AJG Well, it is to make the position attractive, I think. He has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. It is a most affecting expression, that He has brought us out of the realm of darkness into a sphere that is dominated by One whose disposition is love.

HLH Does that in itself constitute our fitness for sharing the portion of the saints in light?

AJG Well, I suppose so. You mean that God has given us light and made it effective, and I suppose our fitness lies really in the fact that we have been redeemed and have received the Spirit.

AAT I notice the expression "firstborn" is used. I am wondering whether the thought that we have about being born is right, whether He is not first in every way?

AJG Yes, I do not think the expression "firstborn" has particular reference to birth. It has reference to personal pre-eminence I understand. The firstborn in Israel had a double portion, he was marked out as particularly distinguished. That, I think, is the way in which the expression "firstborn" is used in scripture.

HLH It is connected with right or status, is it not?

AJG Yes.

EME Would Joseph be a type of that? He was not the firstborn actually but he had the pre-eminence?

AJG Exactly. And so in Psalm 89: 27 it says, "I will make him firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." It is what God will make Christ in relation to the earth - His firstborn, highest of the kings of the earth.

SH As firstborn from the dead our position is secure?

AJG Well, quite so. The very expression "firstborn from among the dead" involves that there are others who come out from among the dead, but He is pre-eminent among them. Of course, He is actually first from the point of time, "the first fruits, Christ, then those that are the Christ's at His coming," but it is not a question of time so much as a question of pre-eminence.

CBl In connection with pre-eminence it says, "God has anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy companions."

AJG Yes, quite.

CB It would mean that every part of the truth is to be taken up in Christ, the One who has the first place?

AJG Quite so, and I think when we contemplate the greatness of Christ, as suggested here, and His having come into manhood, you can see how much it means for God, that there is now before Him, beyond death, a Man of such personal glory, and then the pleasure God finds in all that stands related to Christ, and especially the assembly.

AT I was thinking of what is formative in endurance and longsuffering, in the saints.

AJG Endurance would form us? Quite so. God Himself is spoken of as the God of endurance, and also marked by much long suffering, and the Lord supremely endured; so that these are features that are seen in God and in Christ, and the saints are to take them on.

HAL It adds here, "with joy."

AJG Quite so, that is that we ought to be joyful. Not that we have not sorrow. It is right that we should have sorrow, Paul said, "as grieved, but always rejoicing," and the Lord is called the Man of sorrows and yet He speaks of "My joy." At the same time we ought to be joyful, and it is dishonouring to God if we are not.

RS This is not the subduing side of the kingdom, is it? Is it not more the attractive side of it, the Son of His love?

AJG I think so. There is, of course, the delivering side, delivering us from the authority of darkness, but it is not so much the subduing thought as you say, but rather the attractiveness of the position, that we are now in a realm, you might say a protected realm, that is dominated by the Son of His love.

LAC Would the thought then be that we are brought into a realm where the authority of light has sway?

AJG Yes, light has sway there, but it is the light that shines in the Son of the Father's love. So that it is the light of the way God has come out in revelation, and the perfect answer to the revelation in His Son.

SH So we give thanks to the Father.

AJG Quite so. That is what is in mind, that we should be led on to that.

JS What part has this in the morning meeting, in connection with "firstborn "? We do not go backwards?

AJG I think if we take account of Christ as the *beginning*, firstborn from among the dead, if we begin to touch the blessedness of union with Christ, association with Him on the other side of death, then we do not want to go back to what He was here. The Lord is not going back. He is going straight forward. And so in Psalm 19 it says, "He is as a bridegroom going forth from his chamber; he rejoiceth as a strong man to run the race." Well, a strong man starts the race with the confidence that He has power to go right through to the end, and he is not going to be diverted, he has ability to go from start to finish, and to reach the end of the course. And I think that is what we need to

have before us at the Supper, that, as the Lord takes us on He has ability to lead us right through to the end without any divergence or going back, and He will rejoice to do it.

TG To be able to apprehend what we have been brought into, and to know our place with Christ would deliver us from anything that is in this world.

AJG It would deliver us. So far as circumstances here are concerned, we are to be strengthened to go through them in all endurance and longsuffering with joy. That obviously has reference to conditions here. Endurance and longsuffering are not needed in the enjoyment of the privileges of the assembly.

TG So the end in view is that God will get the praise and glory?

AJG Quite so.

AY Would you say that the apostle in view of the great danger that was ahead of the saints at Colosse, thought it but right to bring forward at first this attractive side of the truth, so that their minds and affections might be held in connection with their Head in heaven?

AJG I am sure that is right.

HAL Moses in blessing the tribes puts Benjamin before Joseph and speaks of Benjamin as the "beloved of Jehovah," and then we get the inheritance spoken of in Joseph. Would that be in keeping with this scripture?

AJG He enlarges on the thought of blessing in relation to Joseph, does he not, and speaks of him as the one separated from his brethren, which really views Christ as firstborn from among the dead, because He is separated from His brethren through death and resurrection.

AAT We often speak of Ephesians as the highest expression of truth. I suppose that is right as regards the assembly, but in connection with the Person, the greatness of the Person, we get that in Colossians, do we not?

AJG I think we do, although we get certain expressions in Ephesians also, that greatly emphasize the personal greatness of Christ. We get for instance, that He is the One who "fills all in all." Well, He could not do that if He were not God. And then again we get that He has gone up far above all heavens, far beyond the created sphere, and that again greatly impresses us with His personal greatness, besides His positional greatness. His greatness in exaltation as Man, which we have in Ephesians to a great extent. But this does enlarge on the personal greatness of Christ as Creator.

RAE Would you say that our position as brethren of Christ, and the relationship of the assembly to Him, and our place in sonship before God, all belong to the other side of death?

AJG Oh, yes, clearly.

RAE And if we are to enter upon them intelligently and with right feelings, it is necessary to apprehend Christ there first, is it not?

AJG Yes, I am sure.

HOE Is that why it says, "He presented himself living after he had suffered." We do not go back to the sufferings, we just refer to them to hold our affections as it were, but living.

AJG Yes, quite so, "living." "He presented himself living" - they had got Himself, and Himself beyond death, so that the things they are to touch now are to be apprehended as real and substantial, although they are spiritual. He would come in through closed doors, and disappear from their sight and so on. It was a spiritual order of things that they were now entering upon, and yet it was substantial, that He was there living and could be handled.

RS Were not the Colossians in danger of being imposed upon by the minds of men, and taking created things as the objects of worship, angels and so on. And therefore to correct that the apostle brings in the greatness of Christ personally, as the Creator of those created things?

AJG Exactly.

HAL This verse, "For in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell," refers to Christ here in this scene before going into death?

AJG Yes.

HAL And then the verse you referred to in the next chapter is in connection with His present position?

AJG Yes, quite so.

JM In Isaiah 53: 8 it says, "He was cut off out of the land of the living."

AJG Well, that, of course, refers to His death, but His death viewed as something that man brought about in hatred to Him. But when we are speaking of the ark going through Jordan, it is not a question of His death brought about by man, it is a question of Christ in His glory, moving on God's behalf to open up a way through death for His people to be brought into all that God has purposed for them.

AKH Would that be John's line? In John's gospel the fact is recorded that He bowed His head.

AJG Yes, it is John's line. In John's gospel it is the Lord moving of Himself all the way through, so it says, "Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father," that is how it is viewed, that He is departing out of this world to the Father, opening up another scene, the scene of the Father's pleasure.

EME Is the work of redemption viewed here as an integral part of the scheme, the forgiveness of sins coming in there as a parenthesis?

AJG Yes. It is a necessary thing to keep that in our minds, that however much we touch in the way of privilege, however much we enter upon what belongs to the assembly and sonship, yet we never lose the sense that as individuals, this has been necessary, and that we *have* forgiveness of sins. It means that we can move in the greatest things with liberty, and feel that there is nothing artificial or unreal, in regard of our position.

HOE So it is remarkable that it is in the first chapter of Ephesians and the first of Colossians, that this truth is brought out.

AJG Quite so.

LAC Have you in mind that the verses preceding verse 18 show how adequately "the kingdom of the Son of his love" has met the authority of darkness, so as to set up the saints here, walking in the sight of the Lord as mentioned in verse 10, and then, endurance and longsuffering marking them, and joy; and then the thought of their going on, after verse 18 to the full purpose of God and not so much connected with things here, is that in your mind?

AJG I do not know that one had linked them together quite like that, but I think as the apostle was writing, the Spirit of God leads him on. He speaks of the Son of the Father's love and of our having redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in Him, and then he is led on to this wonderful description of the personal greatness of Christ, so that every other should be eclipsed for us.

AY Do you think we see the glory of His Deity presented in chapter 2?

AJG Yes, clearly. Only it is referring to Christ as having become Man. The glory of His Deity is always carried in our minds, and it is enlarged on here, but in relation to Him who has become Man, and who is Head of the body, the assembly.

HAL What are we to understand by "Who is *image* of the Invisible God"?

AJG Well, image is usually taken to refer to representation, so that I suppose He is the exact representation of God on the one hand: all the light of God that we shall ever have, we shall have in Christ. But then, while He is that on the one hand, it immediately goes on to speak of Him as "Firstborn of all creation." That is, He has come out from God on the one hand as the image of God, but on the other hand as toward God He is firstborn of all creation. He has now taken a position in relation to the creation, and that is toward God.

JHH We notice that "the Father" and "the Son" are both mentioned here, which are both terms of endearment. You referred earlier to what is substantial and living. Do you think that while we, of course, would be governed by light and truth as to our position, that love must be there? Is it not a question of true affection for Christ, and affection for the Father too in all that we share and enjoy together?

AJG Oh, yes, indeed, as was remarked recently and has often been remarked, "If we have not love we are nothing. I mean, love is the whole crux of the matter because God is love, and He is bringing about conditions of life and blessing, that are in keeping with His love, and that will satisfy His love. So that if we have not love we are nothing. If we have not love among ourselves how can God find pleasure in us?

LAC Love in the Spirit is mentioned in verse 8, what is the meaning of that expression?

AJG I suppose it is that you have the ability to love saints whom you do not know personally, and have never seen, but you are conscious of loving them although you have never seen them. Paul had never seen the Colossians and the Colossians had never seen him.

RS Is that not what makes it basic on our side for the opening out of all this wonderful truth?

AJG Yes, I think so. You mean conditions of love among ourselves are necessary.

RS Expansion in affections too.

AJG Yes.

CBI If we are in the enjoyment of divine love, we will love all the saints?

AJG Indeed. But I think it a great thing to get in mind that the whole system that God has in mind to bring in in Christ - He is heading up all things in Christ - is a system of love, all things are to be headed up in One who is loved, that is the divine scheme, to bring forward His Son as loved and place Him as Man

in the position of love, and then to head up all things, every family, in Him. So there is a great system of love before the Father, that is what is in the divine mind. The assembly is in the enjoyment of it already in measure.

HOE And this particular scripture stands in contrast to philosophy and vain deceit? What is of man is not built upon love.

AJG No, quite so.

FHP I was thinking of Solomon in type and what Jehovah called him at his birth, "Jedidiah, beloved of Jehovah."

AJG Yes, quite so.

AY It is very marvellous, as you remark, that God is building such a system up in love. And it is being sustained and held together by the Son, would you say, in contrast to all that is around that is marked by hatred and everything else. But this great system is built up in love and with those so very far away from one another and who do not know one another there is a love and a sympathy for one another marking them.

AJG Quite so.

AAT You said that all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in a Man.

AJG And dwelt here, before His death, and it dwells in Him now bodily, now that He is risen from the dead. But it was pleased to dwell in Him, as it says in verse 19, "In him all the fulness of the Godhead *was* pleased to dwell, and *by* him to reconcile all things to itself." That really refers to what came into being as He became Man, that there was now a Man in whom all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, with a view to all things being reconciled to the fulness, in that Man.

SP What is the idea of "fulness"?

AJG Well, as far as I understand, it simply means as much as the creature can know of God. Obviously there must be that connected with God which the creature can never know, or else we should be equal with God, but as far as God has come out in revelation and can be known by the creature, it is all there in Christ.

AAT And that is what we speak of as the "economy"?

AJG Well, the economy has that in view. The economy is just the arrangement, if one may use a somewhat commonplace expression, the arrangement the Godhead has made with a view to God being revealed to man, and man being able to respond suitably, for God's pleasure. And so, the

Son and the Spirit, two Persons of the Godhead, have taken up relatively subordinate positions, the Son having become Man and the Spirit having been sent down from heaven. But the word economy simply means an arrangement made by the Persons of the Godhead amongst Themselves with a view to working out the thoughts of Their love.

RAE Does it appear from scripture that those positions taken will be retained eternally?

AJG Yes, I think so, clearly.

SP Would you say that the idea of reconciling all things to Himself, is that He would have all things suitable to His love?

AJG Yes, quite so. And what the Lord has done, is that He has made peace by the blood of His cross, that is, He has taken up before God the whole question of sin for the universe, and has made atonement for sin, so that it has given Him the right to take up all things as He will do in the world to come. And all things being held by Him, they will be held, of course, for the pleasure of God, so that all things will be reconciled to God. But then we are already reconciled.

SP So that everything will be for the pleasure of the Godhead?

AJG Exactly. Because all things will be taken up and held by a Man who is Himself God, so that there is no disparity between God and the One who takes up all things and holds them for God.

RS "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" - would that show too that there will be no disturbing element at all in that universe, everything will be based upon the blood of Christ?

AJG I think it refers to what He did in His cross, that He has made peace. That is to say, the offensiveness before God of sin in the universe has been removed by the sacrifice of Christ, and in place of the offensiveness of sin there is the sweet savour before God of the devotedness of Christ in offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin. So that the ground is clear now, and when the time comes Christ will take up the whole scene and hold it for the pleasure of God.

JS So in that sense both Jew and Gentile come in together?

AJG Well, that is not what we are speaking of now, it is not referring to the assembly or to persons, it refers rather to the fact that Christ will take up all things in heaven and earth and hold them for the pleasure of God. But when it is a question of persons it says, "And *you*, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of his

flesh through death." The other speaks of the blood of His cross, but this speaks of the body of His flesh through death, for when it is a question of persons who are moral beings and intelligent persons, we have to understand that the way God has brought in reconciliation is by removing the man, and then bringing in His pleasure in Christ and setting us up in life in Christ.

JM The Lord said, "All power is given unto me both in heaven and earth."

AJG Quite so, and when the time comes, the time the Father has appointed, the Lord will come forth and exercise that power, of course He is exercising it now in a secret way, but He will exercise it publicly then. He will put all enemies under His feet and take up the whole scene and hold it for God's pleasure.

EME What does it mean by "the blood of his cross"?

AJG The blood of His cross refers to the death of Christ, but emphasizing, I think, the value in the sight of God of the sacrifice of Christ. Because the blood refers to the life, the preciousness of Jesus to God, and that He should lay down that life in order to make atonement for sin, and clear the ground so that He might be able to take up the whole scene, is very precious in the sight of God.

EME So that you would say reconciliation in verse 20 is very broad?

AJG Quite so.

RS That refers to the future, does it not? All things are not yet reconciled, but he speaks of the saints as "Now!"

AJG Quite so, it refers to the future. The basis is already laid in the blood of His cross, but it will not actually come to pass until Christ actually takes up things. Then the power of evil will be set aside, and the Lord Himself will hold things and influence them for the pleasure of God.

SP We look forward to the world to come then?

AJG Yes, quite so. Think of what it will be for God when everything that hath breath praises Jehovah.

SP Would you say something about the change of man that is necessary?

AJG Well, it refers to reconciling all *things* to Himself first, which as we say, is future, although the basis is already laid. But then in verse 21 it says, "You who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it (that is the fulness) reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it, if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm."

RAE Could we speak of all things being reconciled in the millennium, or does it await the eternal condition of things?

AJG I think it looks forward to the millennium, it is there that it will be displayed.

DLE Would you say the act of the Lord going into death affects us more when we read of His greatness before we read of His making peace by the blood of His cross?

AJG I think it does, exactly. And I think that should affect us every Lord's Day morning, because the Lord said, "This is *My* body" and then He says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." So it is a question of *whose* body and *whose* blood?

TG Why does it say, "You who were alienated and enemies in *mind*" instead of in heart?

AJG Probably because the Colossians were in danger of being carried away by their minds, and so the Spirit of God is pointing out that our minds are naturally alienated from God, and at enmity with Him.

WH Is that why headship is brought in also - Head of the body?

AJG Yes, quite so.

LAC Is the reconciliation here to the Godhead? You mentioned to the fulness.

AJG It is apparently the fulness, the words "of the Godhead" in verse 19, were put in by Mr. Darby to make it plainer as he thought. But really, it is, in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to itself, that is, the fulness. And then, "And you, who once were alienated in mind by wicked works, yet now has *it* (that is the fulness) reconciled in the body of his flesh."

LAC Would you explain just a little more the thought of being reconciled to the fulness?

AJG Well, it seems to me that we are dealing with God in relation to His creatures, and obviously there must be that about God which the creature can never comprehend, because if it were otherwise the creature would be equal with God, which cannot be; hence there is always that about God which is inscrutable. But the fulness, as I understand it, refers to the light in which God has come out in revelation so that He may be known by the creature, and we are reconciled to that. That is to say, we are made suitable for the position in which God has set us. He has come out in revelation and we are to be suitable to Him as thus known.

RS And is there not a link between the fulness and we being complete in Him? All God requires in man is found in Christ, and then we do not need to go outside of Christ for anything that we require because we are complete in Him.

AJG That is the thought, I think. On the one hand all the revelation of God is towards us in Christ, but then on the other hand, all the perfect answer to that revelation in the assembly is there in the assembly as having Christ as its Head. And therefore there is no disparity between the revelation and the response to it.

LAC Does it convey the impression to our minds also, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit will themselves take pleasure in everything as having upon it the stamp of Christ?

AJG I think so. The fulness to which we are reconciled would really involve the thought of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

AT Giving thanks to the Father as we have here shows that the Father has become the Object?

AJG Yes, the Father is the objective; in the economy, as we speak. He is the Person of the Godhead who has retained the Supreme place of God, so that God might be known as Father in the grace that that Name implies. It is a wonderful thing that God should be known in that light. What has impressed me, although it is lower ground than that of the assembly, is that in the 25th Matthew, when it speaks of the Son of man sitting on the throne of His glory and all nations being gathered before Him, it says, "Then shall the *King* say to those on his right hand," that is, the saved nations, "Come; blessed of my Father." A wonderful thing, that the King of kings will say to the saved nations on the earth. You owe your blessing to My Father, as though the final impression He would give them is not that of official glory, King of kings, but that of One above Him, God known as Father.

CB You were going to say something just now about verse 23: "If indeed ye abide in the faith, founded and firm..."

AJG I suppose the apostle brings in that "if" because he was just a little afraid that some of them might be turned aside from the faith altogether, and that is why it comes in. He says, "If indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm." That is, if you really prove to be genuine, not moved away.

HLH His prayer was based on the hope he had of their faith and love - "If indeed ye abide."

AJG Yes, because the reconciliation is something that we receive by faith, it is presented in the glad tidings, that God has removed what was offensive to

Him, in the death of Christ, and has brought in what is delightful to Him in the Person of Christ, and we receive the reconciliation by faith. Of course, if we give up the Christian faith then we are moved away from the reconciliation.

LAC Is reconciliation and the truth of it, then, entirely objective?

AJG Yes, I understand so.

LAC Would you say a little more as to that and as to the removal of the man? I believe it is generally believed that reconciliation simply means a change of mind and attitude towards God on our part.

AJG It is rather that God shows us in the gospel what He has done, and we receive it on the principle of faith, but then we ought to be honest. It is part of the gospel that God has removed the first man judicially in the death of Christ, and set up those who believe in life before Him in Christ by the Spirit. Well now, if we profess to believe the gospel and receive it we should be honest and accept that our old man *has* been crucified, and move consistently with it.

HAL You were speaking of things being substantial, bringing the thought of the Lord's body. He is not being seen by the world now or anybody, but He was seen by His own only after His death. Will He be seen by the universe?

AJG He will indeed. It says, "Every eye shall see him."

HAL Is that how He is going to hold everything for God as an object?

AJG I suppose not only as an object but by His rule. I mean, in the world to come He will rule.

RS But is not the side of the truth here what is for God?

AJG Exactly.

RS And how God will have Christ effectuate all His thoughts?

AJG Yes, indeed, and hold all things for His pleasure.

AY Do we see that in what is mentioned in connection with the reconciliation in verse 22, the end in view being that we may be presented holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it?

AJG I think that has the present in mind, I do not think that is looking on to the future. "To present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it," we ought to know something about that in the Spirit's power in assembly.

SH In verse 18 it says, "And he is the head of the body, the assembly; who is the beginning..." What do we learn from "who is the beginning"?

AJG Well, I think we were saying earlier that it is a great thing to realize that Christ beyond death is the beginning of everything for God. God is not patching up things in this world, although He will take up the world in the age to come, but Christ beyond death is the beginning of everything for God. And then there is the assembly who is composed of those who are of Christ's order.

RAE Would you say that in order for us to take the ground of our being holy and unblamable and irreproachable, it is necessary to apprehend that the first man has been removed and that we have been set up in Christ before God?

AJG Well, quite so, and have Christ Himself before our hearts. He certainly is holy and unblamable and irreproachable, but then we are *in* Him, we are of His own order and we are in Him. Of course, that can only be taken up by us in any power if we are walking in the Spirit. If we are going on in the flesh, obviously the Spirit will not enable us to take up that truth, but it is there before God in Christ and we are in Christ before God.

EME It says, "If any one be in Christ there is a new creation."

AJG Quite, so. We are entitled in the death of Christ and by the power of the Spirit to dissociate ourselves in mind from all that attaches to us in the flesh and to identify ourselves in mind entirely with the work of God in us, which is new creation and incorruptible. But as I say, we shall not be helped to do that if we are not walking in self-judgment obviously, the Spirit will not promote unreality with us.

LAC It used to be said by Mr. Raven in ministry that God has not bridged the distance but He has removed the distance by removing the man who was the occasion of it.

AJG Exactly. He not only removed the man that brought in the distance, but He has brought in a Man who is wholly pleasing to Him, in whom there is no distance. That is the great thing. There is the removal of the man, and that is essential, but there is the bringing in of a Man that is delightful to God, and that in One of the Godhead, become Man.

SP God's interests are centred in another Man?

AJG Yes, exactly.

RS So that, "to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it" is the way that God has taken us on, basing it on His judicial termination of the unholy man?

AJG Quite so.

CB When we think of God then, He is, so to speak, restful in having Christ risen from the dead, as the One who has, in His precious death, established the basis for the bringing in of an entirely new universe acceptable to Him, and for persons also to be reconciled. Would not that produce rest in the soul of the believer too?

AJG Yes, I am sure. I think it has been said that reconciliation is the link between the line of responsibility and the line of God's purpose. Reconciliation shows how God meets all the failure that came in on the line of responsibility and meets it perfectly, so that there is no issue left unsolved, and that leaves Him free to open up what He has in His purpose.

AY Do we see a sample of that in the younger son in Luke 15, brought from the distance and brought into absolute nearness to the Father, and then brought into the house, clothed and made morally suitable for the house?

AJG I should think so, he was made in every way suitable with the best robe on, and a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. But then he was also a son.

LAC Would you be free to say that every moral beauty that God can rest His eyes on now is the result of His having brought in reconciliation? I have in mind that the display of moral beauty in the saints now for the pleasure of God is the result of the fact that they can look on Christ in whom this reconciliation is displayed.

AJG Well, yes. Of course, the presence of anything that is pleasing to God in the saints is really the result of His own work, it is really new creation. It is perhaps a little more linked with new creation than with reconciliation, but really, the means by which God has acted in us is by engaging us with the One in whom reconciliation has come in. But everything that is pleasing to God in the saints is the result of new creation, I would say.

LAC What is the difference between new creation and reconciliation?

AJG Well, reconciliation is something that God has brought in in Christ and presented in the gospel to be received on the principle of faith, but new creation is what God works in our souls, by the Spirit.

TG So that the glad tidings being proclaimed to them, there is no excuse, none are excusable?

AJG No, there is no excuse for any if they do not receive the glad tidings.

AKH Would there be a link between reconciling all things to the fulness and 1 Corinthians 15, the subjugation of all things? There would be a difference would there not?

AJG Well, there is the work of subjugation, but the reconciling of all things to the fulness is viewed, not exactly abstractly, but as an accomplished thing, or rather a thing that will be accomplished and for which the basis is already laid. It simply contemplates all things being taken up by Christ and held by Christ, but before He can take them up He will have to set aside what is abhorrent, of course. So that the Lord will come out from heaven in flaming fire, it says, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and so on. There will be power to set aside all that is irreconcilable. And then as He takes things up and holds them for God there will be the reconciliation of all things.

EME As sinners we needed a Saviour, but as alienated and enemies we need reconciliation, why is that?

AJG Man needs a Saviour, of course, because he cannot do anything for himself, he is like a lost sheep, but then what God presents is the truth of reconciliation which is more than merely meeting us in our distance, it is a question of having us perfectly at home for His own pleasure.

CBl Reconciliation is to God, is it not?

AJG Yes, it is, and it is *for* God too.

LAC What is the difference between reconciliation as spoken of in Colossians and in Corinthians?

AJG Well, I do not know that there is a great deal of difference, except that in Colossians it would go further. In Corinthians it says, "all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself," but here in Colossians it extends to all things.

LAC "Be ye reconciled to God" in Corinthians, is that the text of a message to be conveyed?

AJG Yes, I think so.

RS "Be reconciled to God" is really the rendering, as though he was telling the Corinthians in his message to them what was his ministry.

AJG I think so.

RS Bringing them into closer confidence with him now, in contrast with the state of things in the first epistle, you would say?

AJG Yes. "We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God." He was not saying that exactly to the Corinthians, he was just saying, I think, what his ministry was.

LAC But could we now in the gospel include such a statement as calling upon men to be reconciled to God?

AJG Well, I think so. You can surely tell them that though they have been alienated and enemies God has brought in reconciliation in Christ, and it is there for them if they will take it up. They can be reconciled to God.

CBl Therefore the ground has been laid consequent upon the death of Christ?

AJG Yes, and on the presence of Christ as Man with God.

AT In Romans it is based on the death of His Son?

AJG Yes, it says, in Romans, we receive the reconciliation. It is something we receive, something that is given us through the gospel.

THE ASSEMBLY AS A GARDEN

Genesis 2: 8 - 25

AJG I think the Lord may help us to see that the garden in Eden is a type of the assembly in its present position of responsibility, that is, in its local aspect, as that in which God in the presence of evil, is meeting the challenge which came into the universe by the introduction of sin through the devil. At this point sin had not entered into the world, man had not become involved in it as yet, but the devil had sinned. The state of things in the second verse of chapter one, was evidently the work of an enemy, or the result of an enemy's sin, because we are definitely told in Isaiah 45, that God did not create the earth waste. The condition that is described in verse 2 of chapter 1, is a condition which was not the condition in which God created it. So that it was either the work of an enemy or brought in as a result of sin having entered into the universe of God. I believe the garden is a type of the assembly in responsibility here, as the sphere in which God is meeting the challenge that that has constituted. So that He intends to secure on earth in the assembly a limited sphere in which there is what is for His pleasure, suggested in the trees that were pleasant to the sight and good for food; and there is, of course, the tree of life in the midst of the garden, that is Christ held in the affections of the saints as the One from whom life is derived, and then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is the great principle of discrimination between good and evil, and the choosing of the good, and the refusing of the evil. All that is what God is securing in the assembly at the present time. I know, of course, that Adam was told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that, of course, is part of the history of the first man; but as looking at it in its typical bearing I think what one has said is borne out by the fact that it says in verse 15, that "Jehovah Elohim took Man, and put him into the garden of Eden to till it and to *guard* it," showing that there was the necessity for guarding, and God introduced that thought of guarding. I think the more we consider this thought of the garden that we shall see that what I have suggested is just. The garden is a limited sphere peculiarly for the pleasure of the one to whom it belongs; Eden itself means pleasure, that is, I take it, that the idea in Eden is the great principle that all that God has created was created for His pleasure. He has a right to secure pleasure for Himself in it. But then that has been invaded, as one said, but in the presence of the invasion of it God has secured a garden in Eden, that is, He will secure and maintain a limited sphere on the earth in the presence of evil, so that all that is according to His mind should be there for His pleasure. And He entrusts Man, that is, in the first place, Christ, you might say, but then ourselves, as

formed after Christ, He entrusts us with the responsibility of guarding it. And that comes in before we get the other type, which comes in in the later part of the chapter, which refers not to the assembly in the position of responsibility here, but to the assembly according to the purpose of God. I think that is borne out by the fact that in the Acts of the Apostles, the apostle is brought to Corinth where the truth of the assembly in responsibility was developed before he went to Ephesus where the truth of the assembly in relation to divine counsels was developed. And I think one can see, that it is morally right that God should take up and solve the challenge that the introduction of evil into the universe has raised before He makes known what was in His eternal purpose. And the very exercises by which good is maintained and evil is refused, and what is for the pleasure of God is considered, those very exercises are some of the means by which God forms the woman, because she must be a moral being: that is an innocent helpmeet would not do for Christ, it must be one with holy sensibilities and intelligence, and these are developed, I believe, by Spirit's work and as a result of all the exercises connected with the local position.

HLH Would you say a moral being is one possessed of the knowledge of good and evil?

AJG Yes, and having a perfect appreciation of good, and a holy abhorrence of evil.

CB You mean Jehovah "built" a woman out of his rib. Would that suggest the moral features built in?

AJG It suggests a process that is constructive, and the whole plan is in the mind of God before He commences. So that it views the assembly, not as having any past history, but as the subject of divine formation in moral and spiritual features.

LAC The man is said to be *formed* in verse 8.

AJG Yes, but the woman is built.

LAC I was wondering if the expression "form" conveys to the mind the thought of a pattern in the mind of God, or whether it would connect itself more with this thought which you have suggested, of that which is moral entering into the formation?

AJG Well, I think "form" suggests that it is divine workmanship. It is not the idea of creation, which is that God spoke and it was done, that He just brings something into existence out of nothing; but formation suggests a moulding

by His hand, so to speak. But building is even more a constructive idea, having a plan in mind before you commence.

SW Would you say that formation stands in relation to what is the work of God individually in us,

while building is more the putting together of us in an assembly position?

AJG Well, there may be something in that, because building requires our being set together, we are "built together for an habitation of God in the Spirit," it says.

SW Why do you get "God" in chapter one, and in chapter two "Jehovah Elohim"?

AJG I think Jehovah Elohim, as far as I understand, is an expression conveying God in relation to His creatures, that is, having certain affections and thoughts regarding them.

CB And what about the idea that Jehovah Elohim *planted* a garden in Eden?

AJG Well, planted shows that it was His own work. The Lord said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." He *planted* a garden. I think it shows He bestowed particular care upon it. If you plant a garden it is a matter of considerable care.

CB You have design in it?

AJG Yes, design is in it.

RAE Would you say that sin entered into the universe in a rank in creation that was above man? Yet God is selecting this earth, and men as forming the assembly, to combat that evil?

AJG That is it, I think. He is pleased in His sovereignty to select man as the one in whom He will work out this great matter of good and evil; Wisdom's delights were with the sons of men.

HLH In the selection of man He had Christ before Him? Adam is said to be a figure of Him who was to come?

AJG Quite so. And He had in His mind, of course, what was in His counsel, the church as the antitype of Eve. Then evil comes in, and becomes a means in God's hand by which He works out what He has in His counsels. At the same time, sin having come in, it is morally right that He should meet the challenge which it constitutes and He is meeting it in the assembly.

HLH So all this is intended to enhance what the assembly really is in the thoughts of God?

AJG Yes, and I believe we shall get enlargement as we dwell on it, the link between the two.

HP What is the thought of the garden being planted eastward?

AJG Well, we get that in the first chapter of the first epistle to Corinthians. It says in an early verse of that chapter, "awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, we are awaiting the sun rising, the coming in of Christ. That is our outlook as in this world.

CB It says, He planted a garden eastward and there He put man whom He had formed.

AJG Eastward is that you are facing the rising sun.

MSS Have you in mind, that every tree would represent the saints?

AJG Yes, I think so, suggesting great variety in life and fruitfulness, and at the same time all for the pleasure of God.

MSS So that in this chapter as connected with the saints, we have the three figures in testimony which God can use, in formation, growth and building. They are developed, are they not, in connection with the teaching of the assembly?

AJG Yes, I think they are.

MSS 1st Corinthians you spoke of, speaking of God's husbandry?

AJG Yes, "God's husbandry, God's building," it says, and then in Ephesians we get "rooted and founded in love." There are the two thoughts which are connected with husbandry and building.

AY Would the idea of satisfaction be seen also in the trees?

AJG Well, it says, they are pleasant to the sight and good for food. There would be, of course, satisfaction in that. And so you might rightly say that would be pleasant to the sight of God first, and good for food, too, I think we may say reverently, and then it is pleasant to our sight, and good for our food too we may appropriate one another in our affections appreciatively.

TB Verse 10 says, "a river went out of Eden to water the garden," does that refer to the Spirit's work in our day?

AJG It refers to the Spirit, I have no doubt - "Went out of Eden to *water* the garden." That is unquestionably the fruitfulness and freshness that God finds in the assembly for His pleasure as a result of the Spirit. The Spirit constantly affords freshness. It is a river, it is not a pool, not something stagnant, it is something that is always living and moving. But then from there it is parted,

so we have the thought of the Spirit giving life and character to the assembly, and then the testimony of divine grace in the Spirit going out from the assembly universally.

MSS Would this be similar to the way Paul addresses the saints in the opening verses of 1st Corinthians, or would it involve something more subjective? We know that was lacking at Corinth. Paul speaks to them of what they were in the sight of God.

AJG He says, "The assembly of God which is in Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," which is really viewing them abstractly, disregarding for the moment their actual state. So that, I suppose, viewed thus, we might say that would answer to this. And then again what he says at the end of the chapter, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." Obviously it is only in Christ Jesus that God can work out His thought and take up the challenge, not in the first man. But the history of the first man is interwoven in all this to show that it cannot be in that man, that it is only in men in Christ Jesus that God's thoughts can be realized.

MSS So that in any locality we should retain this thought in our minds?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that. If we regarded our local meeting as a garden for God's pleasure, it would greatly elevate the position and give character to our exercises in relation to it, for it has got to be tilled and it has got to be guarded.

HLH It is first said that the river was to water the garden. Would that represent the Spirit coming into greater recognition as He is in our day?

AJG I believe so. So that all tends to greater freshness and greater fruitfulness.

LAC Would the man as presented here suggest the masculine side in responsibility, in the taking on of things which we know to be for the pleasure of God. But the fact that the tree is in the midst of the garden, in the centre of it, is a type of Christ in that way?

AJG Oh yes, indeed. And when we speak of the masculine side in responsibility, we need to make it clear that that includes brothers and sisters, that sisters have just the same responsibility as brothers in regard of the assembly. Of course, they have their own position in subjection and in silence as regards the actual meetings of the assembly, but they have just the same responsibility as the brothers in regard of conditions and the promotion of what is for the pleasure of God.

HP It is said in the 9th verse that "Jehovah Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight." He *made* them grow.

AJG That is as Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God has given the increase." They were to recognise that, and those who serve have to recognise it.

MSS Would you say something about the thought of "tilling"? He tilled the garden.

AJG I suppose that has in mind the exercise necessary so that there should be the removal of every hindrance to growth and the right conditions for what is sown to spring up. It would involve our care for one another, and so on, I think.

CB Would you say the tree of life in the midst of the garden would suggest Christ, and all the thoughts that God would find pleasure in would find their centre in Christ?

AJG Yes, exactly, and we derive life from Christ. And evidently the tree of life was intended to convey the central idea, that God's thought is that men should live, and live in the life of Christ too, as deriving from Him.

RAE These trees were meant to grow out of the ground, and then in verse 6, it says, "A mist went up from the earth and moistened the whole surface of the ground." Do you think that would be a suggestion of the Spirit's activities subjectively in new birth?

AJG I believe it is. I think the ground is that from which God can secure His fruits for Himself, and the moistening by the mist, as you say, would very likely refer to new birth, that is the initial activities of the Holy Spirit.

RAE That would be the bringing to pass of something entirely new which would form the basis of this combating of evil?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HP So that the four main streams would have a universal bearing?

AJG I think so. Four is usually universal, although it is rather interesting to notice that it speaks of three of them as surrounding a certain territory, and then of the fourth it simply says, "That is Euphrates." There are three divisions of humanity, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and then Euphrates is the great barrier between East and West, the great dividing line. And I think the Spirit is that morally as the great power to hold in check the coming in of the flood of evil. And Euphrates too is the boundary of the land promised to Abraham.

LAC The one river seems to go right through the garden, and it only divides as it comes out. I was wondering whether the thought is one concentrated influence in one direction, the influence of the Spirit. And I was wondering too, if it would correspond, in a way, to the *one* street in the Holy City?

AJG I think that is right. We get the river again at the end of Revelation. It is one river, the Spirit. So the same Spirit all over the world produces the same features in the assembly in its local aspect. All the assemblies are watered by the same Spirit.

LAC In that way if the saints come under the influence of the Spirit there would be nothing conflicting?

AJG No, exactly.

CEH In chapter one references are made to God dividing, do you think that feature would be seen in the assembly now?

AJG It should. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is just that, so God called the light "Day" and the darkness He called "Night," He would not admit of any mixture between light and darkness, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands out as the assertion of that principle that good is to be distinguished from evil. And that is essentially what is to mark the assembly at the present time.

MSS It says of the child in chapter 7 of Isaiah, That He might know to refuse the evil and choose the good. The saints would be morally of that order?

AJG Yes. Choosing the good and refusing the evil.

SW But was not that dependent on what he was to partake of, butter and honey?

AJG Well, that is very much like the food of the land. It is like heavenly food, milk and honey.

LAC Did not the thought of man "guarding" the garden imply that there was an enemy around, and that an attack might be looked for?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think it is very significant that that comes in here before there is any question of sin entering into the world. It is not till the next chapter that sin enters the world, and yet man is put in the garden to guard it, as though God knew well that the enemy was, so to speak, at hand, and the position would be attacked. And so Paul refers to it in his epistle to Corinthians, he says, "I have espoused you to one Man to present you a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived

Eve by his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ."

SW So would you say at this point there is the necessity for vigilance to mark the saints?

AJG That is exactly it, and to bear in mind that it is a garden, a garden for God. That is what He looks for in every place where the truth has a footing, that there should be this character of a garden for Himself.

SW It would seem that there had been some negligence in regard to the garden, and Satan takes advantage of that?

AJG Yes, exactly, he comes and finds the woman, apparently, away from the man.

AY So this principle of vigilance has to be maintained in our day? The enemy would seek to attack from every point. The vigilance of the saints in exercise would be to maintain every principle which stands connected with the assembly which the enemy would seek to attack.

AJG We are from time to time hearing of sorrowful things among the saints, which brings home to us that the enemy is very near. I believe the more the truth is developing and the more the Spirit is seeking to get the assembly as a bride for Christ, the more the enemy will attack. We need to be on the watch, first as to ourselves and then in regard to the saints.

CB That was what Paul said at Ephesus, Wherefore Watch. Do you think that the apostle as you mentioned just now, was a vessel raised up on these lines, as guarding the thought of the assembly from the attack of the enemy?

AJG Yes. But then it is not left to the apostle to do it, although of course, he did it, but then he places the responsibility on the Corinthians with regard to the evil that had appeared in their midst; he lays it on them that *they* must do it. He says, I have already judged, but *they* must do it.

CB Therefore that would refer to every local company?

AJG It would indeed.

LBl After sin came in and the way God dealt with it, would you say the garden is a type of the assembly and the way that evil must be dealt with, man is sent forth from the garden?

AJG Well, He put the cherubim, it says, with the flame of the flashing sword towards the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life. And He says, "Man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he stretch out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live

for ever." So that God was guarding the way to the tree of life. It does not exactly say that He was guarding the garden there, but God was guarding the way to the tree of life, that He would not have that order of manhood perpetuated. He was I think, guarding His rights to shew mercy, too, that through redemption He would work out His thoughts in man, through redemption and new creation.

AY So that in that light now, would you say; God has come out in this character and is known in mercy in the mercy seat?

AJG Quite so.

LAC There is a scripture which speaks of having our senses exercised to discern good and evil. I was wondering if that is what God has in mind now in the thought of local assemblies representing the garden.

AJG Well, quite so, and how much discernment is needed by us, and that is another reason why the Spirit is to get an increasing place with us; not only to give us understanding of the mind of God, but to promote sensibilities and especially the spirit of discernment.

LAC Is the thought of tilling and guarding seen right through in the ways of God in administrative matters, the teacher and the prophet and so on, but there is the doorkeeper as well?

AJG Yes, quite so. I think under David there were as many doorkeepers as there were those who praised Jehovah (1 Chronicles 23: 5).

LAC And He is setting a hedge about it in connection with his husbandry?

AJG Yes.

TB Would the names of the streams have any special bearing?

AJG I cannot say much about it. It says most about the first of these four main streams, the first one is Pison, that is it which surrounds the whole land of Havilah, where the gold is, and the gold of that land is good. The bdellium and the onyx stone are there, so that it stresses that there is a section of the earth where the treasure is, and Mr. Taylor has referred to that; that while the going out of the gospel is universal, yet in the ways of God, as things have developed, the treasure, that is to say, that which has produced an answer to the truth of the assembly, has been more or less limited to a certain section of the earth, that is the Western world, and what has grown out of it. So that while at the outset the apostles were told to go out into all the world, to preach the gospel to every creature, yet there came a point in Paul's ministry where he thought to go in one direction and the Spirit forbade him, and then

he thought to go in another direction and the Spirit of Jesus suffered him not, and then eventually he is guided in the western direction, as though it is a question of the servant finding, under divine guidance, where God has placed the treasure, those in whom He is really working in view of the assembly.

LAC And the Spirit of God is influencing all such movements and directions, as suggested here in this river?

AJG Exactly. The two other streams, it says, that which surrounds the whole land of Cush and that which flows forward toward Asshur. It just says that it goes in those directions, as though to maintain the truth that the testimony of divine grace flows out to all, at the same time it indicates that the real treasure is in one particular section of the earth.

LAC Would it be then that the first is suggestive to us of Japheth's descendants, the second Ham, and the third Shem?

AJG I am not quite sure whether you can work that out exactly, because as far as I can see, in chapter 10 Havilah is Shem and Asshur which is Assyria, seems to come from both Ham and Shem, a mixed race. So I doubt whether it can be worked out in actual detail, but I believe that is the principle of how the matter stands.

MSS With regard to the thought of the treasure, is it not a similar thought in the parable in which the Lord speaks about the treasure being hid in a field? The man in the parable bought the field.

AJG Yes. There is the work of God there in souls, which is the treasure, and the whole field is bought in order to secure the treasure.

CLPE Does the treasure then not refer to the whole assembly but only what answers to it now?

AJG I would not say that. I think it refers to the whole assembly, but the point is in what part of the earth is the assembly, in fact, being secured? It is not being secured in Asia at the present time, except perhaps an odd individual here and there, but I mean so far as the general position is concerned, it is being secured in a certain section of the earth.

RAE So that if you found yourself in China you would be free to tell anyone you met that God was disposed towards them in the forgiveness of sins. But an intelligent servant of the Lord would not set out to labour there, would he?

AJG No, I think he would find that the Lord would not direct him there.

HP I was thinking of the wonderful position that man is placed in. It says that Jehovah took man and put him in the garden.

AJG That shows what a privileged position we are in. And it shows that every brother and sister ought to take up intelligently the exercises which relate to the assembly; at any rate in his own locality. To be watchful, having regard of his own soul, not to allow any entrance to Satan, and then to be caring for the saints, so that the enemy does not get in at all, and that right conditions are maintained through exercise, so that what the Lord gives in the way of ministry may be received and bear fruit.

MSS The land of Havilah is the only one that is described, does that suggest the paramount importance of the work of God? Really nothing else matters and nothing else should matter.

AJG And where the treasure *is*. Of course, other families will be brought to light in due course, and they will be the result of the work of God, but the treasure for the moment is where God is working in view of His supreme thought of the assembly. The treasure hid in the field is one of the parables of the kingdom of the heavens.

AY It was something that was of such great value that it says that He sold all that He had and bought the field, in order that He might secure the treasure.

AJG Yes, it has been pointed out that it says in that parable that He "sells all whatever he has," as though to give it a present thought, and the present activities of Christ in the gospel are concerned with bringing to light the treasure in view of the assembly, and then in relation to the pearl of great price, it says He sold all whatever He *had*, putting it in the past, that He *loved* the assembly and has delivered Himself up for it, and now the present activities of Christ are concerned with bringing to light the treasure in view of the assembly.

SW Would you say the treasure is what is for God and the pearl more what is for Christ?

AJG The thought of treasure is to show that it is of great intrinsic value, it is the work of God in souls.

RAE Would it link on with what you are suggesting, to see that the last parable in Matthew 13 is a question of discriminating between good and evil?

AJG That is very good, because in the parable of the tares, the public position is that good and evil are being allowed to go on together and that God is not separating them, that is the position publicly. But then in the assembly He is separating them, and we are responsible to do it. The net brings all kinds of fish to land and they sit down and put the good in vessels and cast the worthless away. So that you have got that principle in the assembly, that is the

answer to what Satan has introduced publicly of good and evil going on together.

AKH You referred earlier to the matter of appropriating one another. I do not believe we understand much about it, I would like you to open it up a little. It says, "Of every tree of the garden thou shalt freely eat."

AJG One great thought in the assembly is love, and therefore it is a great thing to appreciate one another, and look at the work of God in one another, and not look at natural features unduly; but concentrate on the work of God in one another and then we shall find how lovable the saints are. And when we come together to break bread it is not necessary, as soon as we come into the room, to shut our eyes, and keep them shut. It is a good thing to see the saints come in one by one and rejoice as you see them, we are glad to see them and we miss any who are absent, but those present have all come to remember the Lord; and that gives them beauty in our eyes.

LAC In that way we would come into line with what is the Spirit's own mind. The gold of that land is good, would that not be the Spirit's way of mentioning, so to speak, His appreciation of what there is amongst the saints?

AJG Quite so.

CB The joy of seeing them come in is the idea of appropriation, is that it?

AJG Yes, I think so. Not only on that occasion, but generally the idea of appropriation is that in our affections we embrace one another, and appreciate the spiritual worth of one another.

LBl Would not what we have in the early Acts come in here? They had all things in common.

AJG Yes, it would, exactly. Because the more we concentrate on the work of God in one another the more we appreciate one another and are knit together.

LBl Not that things there were common, but there was mutual regard and love for one another.

AJG Exactly. We have not yet reached the second part of the chapter, but the type of the woman as builded from the rib taken out of the man has been kept a good deal more before us from time to time, than the view of the garden as a type of the assembly locally. Of course, this type of the woman is a very important one because it is a question now of the assembly according to divine counsel.

AY So that in Ephesians we get the apostle saying, This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly. Is that what we get here in type?

AJG Yes, and there is no question here of responsibility, it is a question of divine workmanship, what God is building, and all according to Christ, that is, there was nothing in the woman but what had come out of the man.

AY So that we can view the assembly now as according to the order of Christ, not having any past history in that sense?

AJG That is it, exactly. But then it is building, it is not creation in that sense, although of course, it is new creation from another point of view, but it is not creation in the sense of that God spoke and it was done, but it was builded, constructed, it is going on through the work of the ministry, and aided by the moral exercises involved in the maintaining of the garden, I believe.

AKH Is there a difference between viewing the assembly as being built in that way, and as having a past history?

AJG Oh, yes. Of course, the assembly as such, viewed in this light as that which is builded of God, has no past history, although the persons composing it have, and that necessarily, because the assembly is to be a vessel that has been formed in holy affections, intelligence and sensibilities, and hence it is composed of persons who have had a past history, and in the extrication from all that that past history involved, are instructed and built up in these features.

BB Would we view the assembly here as how the Queen of Sheba viewed things? She saw the wisdom of Solomon.

AJG Yes, she *saw* the wisdom of Solomon. It is a remarkable thing, that it is not only that she *heard* the wisdom of Solomon but she *saw* the wisdom of Solomon, and she saw it in what was there under his hand. And that, of course, is a type of the assembly. That is, she saw the house that he had built, that is, the assembly for Christ, and the food of his table, and the deportment of his servants and the order of service of his attendants and their apparel and his cupbearers, and then finally the ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah. So that it is really what anyone ought to see as they come in amongst us, especially on Lord's Day morning, they ought to see what is for Christ, they ought to see things in perfect order, and the becoming deportment and apparel of those who take part, and then the ascent by which the Lord leads us to the Father. They ought to be able to see that. And if they *do* see it, it is the expression of the wisdom of Christ.

LAC Referring to the section from verses 18 to 20. Apparently your thought is linked with the first part of the chapter as connected with the man viewed as the saints in responsibility as placed in charge of the garden.

AJG I think there is no doubt that the process of building goes on partly by means of the exercises connected with the previous part of the chapter, that is the choosing of the good and the refusing of the evil, and so on, and the guarding and the tilling. All these I believe are the means that God uses for the building, because if we have got to learn good we learn it in Christ, and if we learn evil we learn it in the death of Christ, that is to say, we learn God's judgment of it in the death of Christ, and so on. So that it is a question of Christ being formed in us by God's work, but that work is promoted by means of these practical exercises, it seems to me.

LAC Do you view the man here in verses 19 and 20 as a type of Christ?

AJG Oh, yes, entirely.

HLH The question of good and evil then was really solved in the death of Christ, was it not, and in that same death this woman has been built.

AJG Quite so, and we learn everything there or else in Christ personally. We learn love in the death of Christ and in Christ personally, and as we were saying, we learn the judgment of evil there. So that everything is learned in Christ and in His death, and God works by that means in us, so that the Man in these verses 18 to 20, is of course Christ, and no one but Christ, because the woman is formed out of Him and brought to Him.

MSS I think it would help us if you would explain the difference between the woman being built from the man's rib, bone of his bone, and what we have in Rebecca's case, being of his family and kindred, both referring, as we know, to the assembly.

AJG I think being born of God underlies being kindred to Christ. My impression is that kinship also involves that we are of Christ's own order by partaking of His Spirit. That is, we receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the heavenly Man, and that constitutes us, I think, of His order. But then this is a question more of formation.

CB It says of Eve, "And Jehovah Elohim... brought her to Man." Would you say that is the work of God, and she is brought to the man as formed in features suitable to Him?

AJG Yes, quite so.

CB Then what about Ephesians 5, The washing of water by the word and presenting to Himself a glorious Church, that is the work, of Christ?

AJG Yes, quite so.

RW He says, *This* time. What would that suggest?

AJG Well, I suppose Adam looked round on the creatures and he saw that every male creature had its female, and he thought of himself, and said, I have *no* helpmate, or no companion my like, every other creature has and I have not, and his heart longed for a companion his like. And now as the woman is brought to him he says, This time. And so with the Lord, there is much under His hand to be brought out in resurrection, the different families that God has formed, all bearing some feature of divine glory; but none of them His like, none of them the fulness of Christ, but now the assembly is being brought into view and He can see His own fulness in it. That is what it will be in result, at any rate, when the work is complete, and He is entitled to look at the thing as complete. It will be His exact counterpart, so far as is possible in the creature, the counterpart for Christ as a Man.

MSS And to take that up, there must be moral features in the saints answering to what is seen in Christ Himself?

AJG Exactly. Not only certain features but every feature as seen in Christ as Man.

AKH Would the flesh be Christ characteristically while bone would be His order, more inward?

AJG Well, I am not sure that one is too defined in one's mind as to it, but evidently the flesh would bring in the thought of what is seen in the way of beauty and so on, and fulness too.

HLH In the Psalms you get Him saying, "My bones were not hidden from thee when I was made in secret, curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth," and then He refers to His unformed substance. The thought of substance to fill it out, the framework of the bones.

AJG Yes. The woman is the glory of the man, it says in Corinthians. I think one can see that, that the assembly is to be the glory of Christ, the displaying of what Christ is in moral excellence and so on, in the beauty of it, the grace of it, and yet she is entirely of Him, so that she does not glory in herself, but she is entirely of Christ.

AY Have you anything to say in relation to this sleep in verse 21, "And Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Man; and he slept."

AJG That no doubt refers to the death of Christ. The work of formation is going on at the present time; we know that Christ is not actually in death now. He is in glory, we all understand that, but at the same time the death of Christ becomes a great lever by which we are formed morally, as we learn love there; we learn righteousness and holiness there.

LAC You mean that there is a way of viewing the death of Christ entirely apart from its having any connection with sin and evil, but as laying the foundation for the building of God?

AJG Quite so. As I say, love is learned there, righteousness and holiness are learned there, and so on.

LAC I would be glad if you would say a little more about that. It is very instructive.

AJG We have just to go slowly and be taught by the Spirit. What I think one can see is that this type of the woman is entirely a question of divine formation, according to Christ, and I think it is a good thing to keep that in mind steadily. And then on the other hand, the one who is to be the fulness of Christ obviously must be formed in holy intelligence and affections and discernment and so on. And hence it is a question of the way these things are done, and the wisdom that God employs, and evil, as introduced into the universe by Satan, is just something that He uses. He is so great that He can use everything for the furtherance of what He had conceived in His counsels.

HAL We were having the other evening something about the fulness of God. Here we are speaking now of the fulness of Christ.

AJG The fulness of Christ as a Man. He is the Man of God's purpose and pleasure, a divine Person become Man, in order that there might be a Man wholly great enough, personally and morally, to satisfy the heart of God. And then that Man is to be expanded, if one might use that expression, in His body, the assembly. Not that she has anything but what she has derived from Him, but the matter is expanded.

HAL So that when we look at Christ we say. What a Man; and when we look at the church we say, What a woman; She is the fulness of Him.

AJG Quite so.

MSS Do you think there is an allusion to this passage in the 20th John, where the Lord shewed unto them His side?

AJG It is usually thought so, and I think it is right.

RAE Is it not significant that when the Lamb's wife is brought forward in the end of Revelation it refers to her there as having made herself ready, and her clothing being the righteous acts. The fitting to be the Lamb's wife has been by the facing and the going through of these moral exercises.

AJG Well, quite so. In the 45th Psalm we get both thoughts brought in, it says, that her clothing is of wrought gold, which refers to the work of God,

and then also it speaks of her clothing being of embroidery, suggesting what *she* has done.

HAL Wrought gold means that something has been done with it?

AJG Gold usually refers to what is of God, but then it is *wrought* gold, suggesting that it is divine workmanship, what God has wrought. But embroidery is more what we have done.

POWER WITH GOD

Esther 4:9-17; Esther 5:1,2; Esther 5:9-14; Esther 6:1-12; Esther 8:1-4

AJG We were saying together last week that this book has particular application to the present time, because it contemplated definite movements of the enemy, which have in mind the complete obliteration of all that is genuine as maintaining what is due to God. The thought of Mordecai the Jew, and the people of the Jews is prominent in the book, and we remarked that the idea of the Jew is genuineness according to Romans 2, where it says, "He is a Jew who is so inwardly". That is, the idea of the Jew in this book stresses, that what God is looking for is reality, genuineness. He does not look on the outward appearance He looks on the heart, what is inward, and Mordecai is several times spoken of as "*the* Jew," and then his people are spoken of as "the people of Mordecai." And we had in mind that we should be concerned to take on the features of Mordecai at all costs. What is characteristic of him is that he is always viewed as sitting in the king's gate, that is, having a right judgment of things according to God, and maintaining a course that is consistent with that judgment; and that involves suffering and indeed bitter hostility, but then there is also another side represented in Esther, and that is that we should develop in the features that will afford God a reason for coming in on behalf of His people. We dwelt last week on the features that were first of all developed in Esther in order to make her agreeable to the king, who may be regarded as typifying God - features produced by the work of the Spirit, of whom Hegai is a type - but now we come to something further in Esther in the end of chapter 4 and beginning of chapter 5, that is, that which will give her power with the king, that is, with God. Not simply make her personally agreeable, but call forth the assurance that whatever she asks she shall have. That is what is needed at a time of crisis, and we are in a time of crisis. Evil is rapidly developing to its head, and Satan is behind it to get rid, if possible, of all that is genuine in the maintenance of the rights of God, and in such a position, what God is looking for is conditions amongst ourselves that will give Him a warrant for coming in. That is what the latter part of the history of Esther personally has in mind. Esther might have thought, viewing the matter naturally, that she was in a sheltered position, and that therefore she need not specially trouble herself about the position that was outside. Many of us may not be personally affected by the oppression of unions and other means by which Satan is seeking to make it impossible for those who maintain the rights of God to live, many of us may not be in personal contact with it. But the point is, are we taking our share in the exercises connected with it, and developing in conditions that will give us power with God?

Obviously God could come in at any time apart from the saints, if He chose, but what He wants to do, is to come in in answer to the petitions of His people. That is, He wants to draw out in them His own feelings in relation to the matter.

VB You referred to conditions among the people which would warrant God's coming in. Do you refer to the fasting that Esther enjoins on Mordecai and the Jews?

AJG That is an important element. I was thinking too of love expressing itself in laying down our lives for the brethren, because that is what Esther comes to, she is prepared to lay down her life for her people, she says, "If I perish, I perish." But along with that, as you say, what gives real moral power to it, is this element of fasting. She is prepared to go in and request the king, that is, she is prepared to make her requests known to God, but the point is, what is going to give her power with God? Because she went in not knowing whether she was going to be heard or not, it was all a question of whether she found favour in his sight.

AAT How is fasting worked out today?

AJG Fasting is the denial of things that are legitimate. Fasting is not the disallowance of the flesh, that is normal Christianity, there is nothing abnormal about disallowing the flesh. But fasting is the refusal of things that are legitimate because of the urgency of the position.

AKH You refer to laying down our lives for the brethren, which is in John's first epistle. I was wondering whether there would be any correspondence between Gaius in the third epistle, and the elect lady in the second, and the features seen in Mordecai and in Esther?

AJG There is a certain correspondence. In a sense, the elect lady would perhaps answer more to the features of holy care, because she was maintaining the truth, or rather she was enjoined to do so by refusing to admit anyone into her house, bringing anything contrary to the doctrine. Whereas Gaius was really laying down his life for the brethren in that he was receiving them into his house and sending them forth in a way worthily of God.

LAC Who would be represented in Hatach the chamberlain who conveys the communications between Esther and Mordecai?

AJG I suppose it is an element of sympathy. I think as the book develops we see certain elements of sympathy coming to light, there is this Hatach the chamberlain that Esther had at her disposal, and then in chapter 7, one of the king's chamberlains, Harbonah, comes in and speaks well of Mordecai, he

says, "Behold, also, the gallows fifty cubits high, that Haman made for Mordecai, who *spoke good for the*

king." So that you have certain elements of sympathy appearing as the book proceeds. And that is often the way, that if we will take up the exercises that conditions call for, we will find that there are those who are sympathetic, perhaps in a minor way, but God can use them.

HLH Is not faith seen in Mordecai in that he refers to deliverance coming from another direction if she did not act?

AJG Quite so.

HLH Is not that an element that would strengthen us in the times we are in?

AJG I think it is. And I think it is very interesting, if we might just for a moment refer back to chapter 3, where we had in verse 7, Haman casting the lot, he did it in the first month, but he evidently cast the lot month by month or day by day in order to determine on what day and of what month his plan of destroying all the Jews was to be executed. And although he cast the lot in the first month, the lot fell for the twelfth month and the thirteenth day of that month, and the lot is at the disposing of the Lord, so that shows that God has a way of holding things back. He is fully aware of the plotting of Satan, all his machinations, but He has a way of keeping things in check and holding them back, deferring them. It is like, "He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way," and "That which restrains," and so on. So that we always have that in our minds, that the whole matter is in God's hands and He has what can hold things back and give time for the development of what He is looking for in the saints.

HLH And Mordecai would represent the intelligence that apprehends that, I suppose, the deliverance will come, but meantime there is a restraining power.

AJG Yes, quite so. You see the lot was cast in the first month and the letters were sent out in the first month, that what they were to do was to destroy all the Jews in the twelfth month. But then we find that in the third month letters that countermand these instructions, or rather give right to the Jews to stand for themselves, are sent out. So God in delaying matters gives time for the development of what He is looking for in the saints.

HLH And that is developed by the exercise of faith?

AJG Exactly. And then the subjective conditions being developed that He is looking for.

MC Do you think that these conditions were seen in Esther? He says to her, "Who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

AJG Well, what power have we with God? If every brother and sister were really pleasing to God, personally and morally pleasing to God, using the access they have to God to take up divine interests in an intelligent way, what power there would be!

DLE Does it not become our responsibility? Referring to that same verse, Esther could have said, If Mordecai says that deliverance will come from somewhere else, she might have shelved the responsibility.

AJG That is just the point, I think, that Mordecai urges her that it is *her* responsibility. That is really what the Spirit of God would lay upon us, that it is our responsibility. That we ought to be aware of what is working in the world in opposition to the saints who desire to be true, and to take it up as an urgent matter with God.

HOE He also goes on to say, "But thou and thy father's house shall perish."

AJG Yes.

VB So that it is an individual matter in that respect? Every individual brother and sister has that responsibility to take up the matter before God?

AJG Yes, exactly. The Lord says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you." That is like the king here saying, You shall have whatever you want, to the half of the kingdom. The Lord, so to speak, gives a blank cheque, providing there are those conditions fulfilled; that we abide in Him, which will preserve us in moral and spiritual suitability to God, and then, His word abiding in us, which would give us intelligence to know what to ask.

FHP You were speaking a little time ago of right feelings and fasting. Is not all that seen in Uriah the Hittite, in the matter of the Ark and what he said to David?

AJG Yes, it is. Fasting is that character of thing. It is not something commanded but it is something which is done because the urgency of the matter is felt. Certain things which in normal circumstances would be legitimate, are therefore done without, because the demands of the testimony are so urgent.

AY At a time of crisis there is to be no holding back, as Mordecai says here to Esther, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace."

AJG Exactly. And I think it is right to say, it is a time of crisis now and will be till the Lord comes.

LAC Esther acted in a perfectly legitimate way in sending raiment with which to clothe Mordecai; but was it not the refusing of what is legitimate which is seen in him in the refusal of the raiment?

AJG Yes, quite so. She was moving according to her natural affections, desiring that Mordecai should set aside his sackcloth and so on. But he was feeling things with God.

LAC Is there a point which arrives when the matter of fasting can cease, in the sense of the distinct intervention of God? He does not later refuse the apparel ordered by the king.

AJG No, quite so. Fasting is, of course, something special, and therefore it may be that in that sense it can go on for a time and cease, but I think the more we are committed to the testimony the more we shall find that it is a time of crisis right through until the Lord comes.

HLH Mordecai is speaking to Esther and saying, "Who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this." Does that not suggest that our position is not at all a promiscuous one, it is definitely ordered of God for some purpose?

AJG I am sure of that. And one feels what immense privilege and power we have available to us if we will exercise it as not only having been brought to God, but being brought out of the bondage that marks so many Christians. Many true believers who have a title to draw near to God are not, in fact, in liberty. But most of us, I suppose, are enjoying a good measure of liberty. God has wrought so that we should be delivered from what would hold us in bondage and brought us into the knowledge of the truth which sets free.

HLH Is the sceptre a symbol of the kingdom then, and of power?

AJG Well, it refers to that, but I think it is a kind of standard that the king required. Is Esther equal to coming up to it? I think it is a suggestion of love, because it is a *golden* sceptre. If we are to have power with God, God says, how much love have you? If we have not love we have nothing. That is, if I am just here going along easily pleasing myself I am not much developed in love, but if I am taking up the burdens of the saints in prayer with God, and perhaps sacrificing to do it, then there is some little expression of love. It is a question whether we are equal to touching the top of the golden sceptre.

RS Is it not important that we should *know*, someone should know, what the enemy is doing? It says, "When Mordecai *knew* all that was done."

AJG Yes, I think it is.

SP Does the fasting here for three days suggest a limited period or does it go on for the whole period of the Christian's pathway here?

AJG Well, one does not want in any way to convey an impression of laying down things in a demanding way, so that as you say it is three days. Fasting really, I think, is what we take up spontaneously as feeling the urgency of the thing, not exactly something that is laid down that we must do. But on the other hand fasting is made much of here. We read that the Lord said in one case, "This kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting." And then it says in regard of the sending out of Barnabas and Saul, "Having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go." And earlier, before that, it says that "they were ministering to the Lord and fasting." This all shews that fasting had a good deal of place in the early days.

SP Would you say the conditions of the moment being so great would call for that?

AJG Exactly.

HLH Do the three days then suggest a certain period of exercise, a process that reaches a climax?

AJG I would think so, and sufficiently long to prove the genuineness of it. It does not only last for one day, it was continued for a second day and then a third day, showing that there was real exercise involved in it.

DLE We notice in verse 17 that Mordecai does what Esther says, previously Esther did what Mordecai told her like as when she was brought up with him. Do you think Mordecai here follows a spiritual lead?

AJG Well, it is very interesting in this book how Mordecai and Esther from this point onward seem to be closely linked together, as though they represent the two sides, each the complement of the other, which God is looking for in the saints. So that at the end of the book, in chapter 9, verse 29 it says, "And queen Esther the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew wrote with all authority," and then in verse 31 it says, "According as Mordecai the Jew and queen Esther had enjoined them." One time the queen, Esther, is put first and Mordecai with her, and then Mordecai is put first and Esther with him; as though it represents two sides of what God is looking for in us, each complementary of the other.

SP Would you say a little more about that?

AJG Well, Mordecai represents, as we were saying, the thought of unflinching maintenance of the rights of God whatever it costs. Esther represents the subjective features that will have power with God, so that God, in answer to her request will come into the matter and save His people.

LAC Is it really that the inward support is quite necessary to maintain the outward position? Esther and her maids are fasting inside and Mordecai and his people are fasting outside.

AJG Quite so. We get, for instance, Simeon, a man characterised by the Holy Spirit and so on, and serving God in intelligence and power, and then we have immediate mention of Anna, a suggestion of the subjective condition that supports what Simeon stands for.

AAT Is that Christ as the Man and the assembly as the woman, the feminine side? Is that how it is worked out?

AJG Well, it is that from one point of view, but on the other hand what Mordecai represents is really a feature to be found in the saints though on the line of the maintenance of responsibility, the maintenance of the rights of God. And then Esther represents a feature in the saints of a more hidden character that gives us power with God. Of course, anything that Mordecai is as faithful is learned from Christ. He is supremely *the* faithful and true Witness.

MSS Could we connect what the Lord says in Matthew 18, "If two of you shall agree... it shall come to them from my Father who is in the heavens"?

AJG Well, I think so. Only, here, what is in mind, is not so much two of you agreeing, but the features that mark the one who is going to do the praying. Of course, we all ought to pray, those that are having to stand for the rights of God and those who are sympathetic with them. But I mean, it is another side to the truth, it is a question not simply of praying, but of whether there is something about us that will command God's attention and ensure an answer.

MSS I wondered if you were looking at it rather in the light of collective prayer?

AJG I think collective prayer derives its power from what marks the individuals. That is if I am not right with God individually, I shall not contribute much to the company in collective prayer, I may hinder.

AT I notice you mentioned just now the thought of commanding God's attention. In Nineveh God's attention would be commanded in their fasting.

AJG Quite so, the fact that they all put on sackcloth and fasted. But that was rather as an evidence of repentance. This is a question of those who already

have access to God.

VB You said just now that the sceptre would suggest a standard. Do you think Esther came up to that standard?

AJG I think that is exactly the point, it not only says that the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand, but it says that Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre, that is she was equal to the standard and answered to it.

RS Is it not right to say that through what Mordecai was saying to her from time to time she was more developing in these feelings? I mean as to what would be suitable to God, because she had before her mind that she would have to go in to the king?

AJG Exactly.

RS In what way do we develop in these feelings?

AJG Well, the more we see things as God sees them, and the more we see how the saints suffer or are threatened with suffering as a result of the enemy's movements, the more, I think, we shall develop in these feelings. The first thing is to be marked increasingly by praying for the saints, praying for all saints and praying intelligently, not simply praying in a general way that God will bless all His people but taking up with God the exercises that His people are confronted with. That will help develop us in the feelings.

RAE And have you before you that we have in our minds, not simply that God loves His people and that He will come in for them but that we should furnish the conditions that would make Him do so?

AJG Yes, exactly.

AY So that in every crisis along this line where there is this subjective element found, it gives God ground to come in for His people?

AJG That is it. So God orders certain conditions here which made Esther to feel that she had got to take up this special exercise. She says that the king had not called her for thirty days, and that there was this law, that if anyone went in to the king without being called it meant death unless he was pleased to hold out the golden sceptre. So all that would promote a great deal of exercise with her.

She would say to herself, I must go into the king, but what must I do in order to ensure that the sceptre will be held out to me? It is either that or being slain. So you can understand that she would go through a great deal of exercise.

HLH Is not one character of exercise suggested in the garments that were associated with mourning and fasting, and another in the putting on of the royal apparel. Does not all that enter into the matter of being pleasing to the king?

AJG I think so. It is striking how chapter 5 emphasizes that: "Esther put on royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the *king's* house, over against the *king's* house. And the *king* sat upon his *royal* throne in the *royal* house." So that it is all emphasizing the great dignity of the king, that is, of God, and what befits us in having to do with God.

HAL I was wondering about, There is *one* law, whether that would not suggest that with God there is no respect of persons?

AJG Well, quite so, and I think it is a question of our understanding that while we have in the Holy Spirit great liberty with God and have title to go in to God at any time, God looks for certain moral conditions. So that it says in the Psalm that if I have iniquity in my heart God will not hear me. It is no use my saying, I am a believer and I have the Spirit and I can draw near to God, if I am allowing iniquity in my heart God will not hear me. That is the law, you might say.

EB Would you say that these features were discerned by the king Ahasuerus, that as she drew near she obtained grace in his sight?

AJG Yes, I think so. As the result of the exercise through which she passed, three days fasting, and then all the exercise involved in putting on royal apparel, what came to light in her determination to go in was that she was formed in love for God's people, so she was prepared if necessary to lay down her life for them.

SP Is the standard then love? Love is that which would enable us to go in?

AJG Yes, exactly, if I have not love I am nothing. That is my measure.

MC Her dress then would speak of what is moral in the saints?

AJG Quite so.

HEB Do you think that what marked her previously in connection with her purification is carried forward? So that that linked with the royal apparel would suggest that she is right inwardly and outwardly?

AJG I would think so. I have no doubt all that, as you say, what characterised her in the early chapters is carried forward, but then there is this additional feature. I mean, we might be marked by virgin character, preserving ourselves in holiness, and we may have taken on something of the features of Christ,

the fruit of the Spirit may be in evidence in us; but then there is this additional feature that God looks for, that we should develop more and more in love that expresses itself in self-sacrifice.

FHP All that marks Esther seems to be set out here including the fact that her title is given to her. I do not think it had been before, apart from the fact that it mentions earlier that she was made queen instead of Vashti.

AJG You mean she is now called. Queen Esther? Quite so.

LAC The golden sceptre is held out twice - she approaches twice.

AJG That is another matter that we shall come to, that even after Haman himself has been hanged that is not sufficient, there are still the results of his influence which have got to be met. So that she goes in again to the king "and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite," (chapter 8) and again the king holds out the golden sceptre. You would have thought that a woman in tears was quite unsuitable in the royal palace, but her tears commended her.

LAC I was thinking specially too of the difference between them both. In the first she is standing but here in the second she is made to arise. It says, in verse 4 of chapter 8, "And the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. And Esther arose and stood before the king."

AJG Yes, that is because it had previously been said that she fell down at his feet and besought him with tears, showing that she is increasing in feeling.

EB So I suppose you would say that God would value our tears in this respect?

AJG Exactly. But then we ought not to overlook the paragraph from verse 9 to the end of chapter 5, because that stresses that Mordecai is in the king's gate, and that is what incites the enemy's hatred. "When Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of fury," and then he says in verse 13, "Yet all this is no avail to me so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." It is that that is stirring up Satan's opposition, that the saints are standing for the rights of God, and there is a testimony to conscience being more and more borne; in regard of military matters and in regard of industrial matters there is a testimony to conscience which is an assertion of the rights of God, and it is that that is stirring up the enemy's opposition.

LAC Is it not very remarkable that after his temporary exaltation, he returns to the king's gate while Haman hastens to his house?

AJG Quite so, it is characteristic of him.

AY I was thinking, that what we see in Mordecai is that he does not seem to have himself or his own glory before him, but he seems to have the rights of the throne before him, he sits in the gate, hence he had saved the king's life.

AJG That is exactly the point, and it is that that the enemy is opposed to, and in chapter 2 we have, that while he sat in the gate two of the king's chamberlains were wroth and sought to lay hands on king Ahasuerus. And you might say that that is some matter that arises in a local company, some evil comes in which is a challenge to the rights of God and the saints learn to deal with it, they learn to maintain the rights of God. It was told to Esther and she certified it to the king in Mordecai's name, that is, it is brought before the assembly. It is certified to Esther and it is investigated and the culprits are hanged. That is like a local matter coming up in the assembly, and by means of that the saints learn to stand for the rights of God. But now it is becoming a more general matter. Mordecai is still sitting in the king's gate, and the enemy is devising now, not only to get rid of Mordecai but *all* his people, all that are like-minded, and that is the enemy's aim.

RAE You mean that fidelity in local assembly exercises qualifies us for fidelity in the public position?

AJG Exactly, and it is that fidelity in assembly matters, using the type, that is brought to the notice of the king at the critical moment, it is that that he is reminded of. And he calls for the chronicles and he reads in the chronicles how "Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, keepers of the threshold" - it is that that is really brought to remembrance at the right moment.

LBr What we have here then is that the enemy does not like to see the people of God pleasing Him?

AJG No, exactly.

RS So is it that the more evil lifts its head up,

the more need there is for these features to be developed in us, so that God can come in?

AJG Exactly. It is a question of the maintenance of the rights of the throne on the one hand, whether it be in assembly matters or in personal matters, and matters of employment and so on; and then, as you were saying, the development of the features in us that Esther stands for. So that we may give God ground for coming in on behalf of His people.

TG Would that be seen in the case of Peter, when they came and laid hands on him the saints were praying?

AJG Yes, quite. It says, "Unceasing prayer was made by the assembly to God concerning him." And so He came in for him.

HEB Can we maintain these two features at the same time, the standing for the rights of God as suggested in Mordecai, and then laying down our life for the brethren, as suggested in Esther, the love you spoke of as seen in her?

AJG That is what is wanted, I think. The idea is, of course, that both what Mordecai stands for and what Esther stands for should be found with us.

CB Would you say the judgment of the saints corresponds with the judgment of God about this matter?

AJG Quite so.

FHP I was thinking of how encouraged we might be in all this, thinking of Daniel who is also spoken of as being in the king's gate, and later we find him spoken to twice as a man greatly beloved, on account of maintaining what was right in the sight of heaven.

AJG Exactly. The book of Daniel and the book of Esther are both most encouraging books on this very line of how God will come in when necessary, but He looks for conditions in us. So there was faithfulness with Daniel and his three companions and then in chapter 9 of Daniel we find the feelings that marked Daniel.

LAC Does it not appear very remarkable that whereas at first Haman was content to postpone the destruction of Mordecai to the twelfth month, and destroy him along with the other Jews, yet his continual unabating faithfulness and remaining in the king's gate, so annoys him that he is willing to accept the advice of his wife and friends to get rid of him immediately?

AJG Well, that is another thing, that if on the one hand we find certain sympathetic elements there are also certain elements supporting what is evil, but then God knows all about it, that is the great thing.

HAL Does God take the same occasion to vindicate the testimony publicly?

AJG Well, He may do so at any time. He did so here in an outstanding way. We cannot exactly dictate to God what He will do, but these scriptures show that He can do so and may do so in an extraordinary way.

HAL Nevertheless Mordecai as standing for the rights of the throne is, as you say, characteristic, he goes back to the king's gate even though the honour is bestowed upon him.

AJG Yes, and it is very striking that he is one who is judged worthy to wear the royal apparel and to ride on the king's horse, and the horse was to have the royal crown set upon it: so that as a result of all these exercises Mordecai is invested, you might almost say, with divine dignity, typically. I mean, it almost suggests what the final upshot of all these exercises is, that the assembly is formed as able to come down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. She can bear divine glory.

HAL Is that what the Lord says to Philadelphia, that He will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship at the feet of the assembly?

AJG Well, I was thinking of that, that is something like it.

RS Haman's wife is the first one to express the idea of this gallows, is she not? What would you say about that?

AJG There is the general thought of Satan scheming against the saints, and there are those who are in sympathy with him who might quite unexpectedly give a turn to things, making things go worse for the moment.

CB Have you anything to say about the vigilance that marks Esther?

AJG Well, it is very striking that she maintains a testimony to the principle of grace in that she invites Haman only to a banquet, and then invites him to another banquet the second day. It seems to me to be a suggestion that in the midst of all these exercises and the serious character of them, the saints are concerned to maintain the spirit of grace toward persons. There is to be no condoning of evil, but nevertheless the maintenance of the spirit of grace toward persons. So that Haman is given an opportunity for repentance, you might say, in the grace shown to him in the first banquet.

EB As it were, keeping within the present dispensation?

AJG Yes, exactly. It is a very important matter, because as evil increases and men become more and more unreasonable, much grace is needed to maintain our spirits in accord with the dispensation.

HOE It says in Romans 12, "If therefore thine enemy should hunger, feed him."

AJG Quite so.

RS In hearing of certain unreasonable treatment to our brethren, the first tendency, if we allow it to work, is to get heated about it, and it is there that we want to be pulled up as to the grace of the dispensation?

AJG Quite so.

BA Do we not see that in all that the enemy plans against the saints, it is for his own destruction in the end?

AJG Quite so. It must have been a real test to Esther's spirit to sit down at the banquet with Haman on the first day. The second day she says, "This wicked Haman," she has got a spiritual judgment about him, but the first day she sits down to a banquet with him.

WR I would like to hear something about verse 12 of chapter 5, Haman saying that the queen would allow no one but himself to come into the banquet.

AJG Oh, well, that is just the boastfulness of Haman. It is just the pride and vain glory of the man, and there is a great deal of that in the world now among those who are opposed to the truth.

MSS The book of records of the chronicles, would it suggest that no bit of faithfulness to God goes overlooked, even though reward may be delayed?

AJG Exactly. So that the last verse of chapter 2 ends like that. "It was written in the book of the chronicles before the king." So that is an encouragement to us, if we have assembly matters to take up and deal with them faithfully, it is chronicled. God takes account of it. It is an example of faithfulness on the part of the saints in maintaining the rights of the throne and He will take account of it, and will not forget it. It will give Him an additional incentive to come in for the saints.

LAC Would you say a little now about this second approach of Esther to the king?

AJG Well, just, I think, that we do not need to be deceived or to relax in our exercises just because there may be a temporary alleviation of the position, or even an indication that God has begun to come in.

The point is that there is still a great deal working. Haman had been hanged, but then the letters had gone out. The evil was still working, you might say. And thus what I think is in mind is that we have got to maintain the exercise as long as there is a threat to God's people, even though we may be encouraged that it looks as if God is beginning to take matters in hand in a certain direction.

LAC Is it not noticeable also that Esther seems to have gained some liberty through her own exercises. At first she only went after a very severe message from Mordecai but now she goes on her own initiative.

AJG Yes, I think that is encouraging.

LBl Haman began to boast very early, but Esther going on with what is positive is seen the second time on her face. Would you say that is very instructive to us?

AJG I am sure it is important that she is really increasing in her feeling and deepening in her exercise, and taking things up now on her own initiative without having to be required to do so, and it says, she "fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite."

RAE Would you say that for the rest of the time the assembly is here now the threat never ceases?

AJG I think we may be assured of that. We may see God come in in a certain direction and be greatly rejoiced by it and rightly thankful for it if and when He does, but we may rest assured that the enemy will not cease as long as the saints are here. It is a question of his hating any maintenance of the rights of God.

HEB What would be the force of writing to reverse the letters of Haman?

AJG That was necessary to undo the evil. You see in the first month of the year the letters had gone out from Haman with the king's seal, telling the people all over his vast dominion, that in the twelfth month they were to slay all the Jews, men and women and children, without exception. And that edict was not to be reversed, it could not be reversed, so the only way to meet it was by the way that was adopted, in the third month to send out further letters, and to speed them too to make sure they got there before the twelfth month, to authorise the Jews to stand up for themselves and fight those who opposed them. And as we read the book we find that God prospered it and the fear of Mordecai fell upon the people and many of them helped the Jews and so on. We have not time for all that detail now but it shows how God came in in a remarkable way.

HAL So the Lord is the One who keeps the door open?

AJG Well, He is, if he does, that is the point. He opens and no man shuts but He also shuts and no man opens, hence we have to give Him ground for opening the door.

EMe So you would say God intends to carry the issue to a complete end, but on our side we must carry through the exercise too?

AJG That is it. Exactly.

LAC Would it be that the faithfulness of Mordecai would move the king to entrust to him his own ring, his authority in that way, but the grace, the grace

of Christ as seen in the man, would move Esther to put him over Haman's house?

AJG I do not know that there is grace in that because as we read later on the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

LAC What would we understand from that?

AJG That the evil is really dealt with drastically and thoroughly. Of course, when it is a question of anyone like Esther giving orders for people to be hanged, in its application to us it is that we judge in our own souls the principles that have got to be repudiated. That is, if God raises an exercise as to joining unions and that kind of thing and brethren suffer through faithfulness, then I begin to look around and see if all my associations are in keeping with the exercise.

HOE Is the ring a sign that God is with us in it?

AJG Yes, I think so.

RS What would you say about the man that God delights to honour, in the honour that was bestowed on Mordecai?

AJG God will vindicate the saints. If He does not do it publicly at the present time He will do it in the world to come. There is no man who has ever been able to bear divine glory who has not failed. Nebuchadnezzar was given a position something like that in the ways of God, "Thou art this head of gold," Daniel said, but then he failed. And so with everyone to whom things have been entrusted. Noah was set up in government and he failed, but then the assembly will not fail, it will come down from heaven from God having the glory of God and be faithful through the millennium and be untarnished as the day of eternity starts.

LAC In the first approach to the king there is the recognition, as you have pointed out, on Esther's side, of the need to immediately gain the king's pleasure. Here, there are four things which she mentions as conditions on which the king could grant her petition. In chapter 8 verse 5, "If it please the king and if I have found grace before him, and the thing seem right to the king, and I be pleasing in his sight." Would it be there the full recognition in a soul of the moral features which must be present in view of having power with God?

AJG Yes, I think so.

WHAT IS DUE TO GOD IN THE ASSEMBLY

1 Samuel 2: 18 - 30; 1 Samuel 3: 15 - 21; 1 Samuel 7: 15 - 17

AJG The setting of these early chapters in the first book of Samuel is that there is great evil all around in that which was outwardly in relationship with God, and that in those conditions Samuel is introduced, and he sets forth first of all the idea of the service of God in that he ministers to Jehovah. And then he sets forth also the thought of the mind of God being brought in for His people in the prophetic word, and then he also sets forth the idea of judgment, judging of matters rightly according to God. All these three things are of the greatest importance at the present time. God looks to be served in the assembly, and He contemplates that His mind should be known in the assembly, and He contemplates also that matters should be judged according to Himself, what is right being maintained and what is wrong being refused; He contemplates that *this* should be maintained in the assembly, and Samuel represents that. But what is running right through, and is especially emphasized in chapter 2, is that there must be a moral basis for all this, and when we speak of a moral basis we mean that none of these things can be secured in any reality or power unless there is the maintenance with us of what is pleasing to God and the refusal of all that is displeasing to Him. So that Samuel was the product under God of his mother's exercises, she desired a man-child and vowed that if God would give her a man-child he should be given to Jehovah all the days of his life, and no razor should come upon his head. That is, he was to be a true Nazarite, characteristically marked by separation to the Lord, and that underlies all that follows. It begins very small in Samuel as a child, but these chapters show how he grows, it says in verse 21 of chapter 2, "The boy Samuel grew before Jehovah," and then in verse 26, "The boy Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with Jehovah and also with men," and then in verse 19 of chapter 3, "Samuel grew and Jehovah was with him." So that what is contemplated is the growth of this element of what is priestly as underlying everything else.

AAT While he had to do with the service he was not a Levite of the house of Aaron, was he?

AJG He was not officially a priest, he was not of the house of Aaron. He was a Levite but he was not a priest. He was not of the priestly family, not being of the house of Aaron, but though not officially a priest he was one morally, and that is really our position, if we may say so humbly, if we maintain what is pleasing in the sight of God. While we are not officially priests, the world

around regards the clergy as the priests, yet we are truly priests if we maintain the moral conditions.

CB Would you say the official side of priesthood seen in Eli was dying out, but the moral side God was causing to increase as Samuel grew?

AJG That is just what is in my mind. The official priesthood was being set aside because of its evil, but God does not set a thing aside until He has something to take its place, and so He already had Samuel there. It says, "Samuel ministered before Jehovah, a boy girded with a linen ephod," stressing what is priestly, for the linen ephod is a priestly garment.

AKH So that in verse 30 it says, "*But now* Jehovah saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour," shewing that there is the moral side.

AJG That is it exactly, and we always have to bear that in mind, that the moral side must underlie everything in the way of privilege in God's things, and that God's principles are unchanging. That whoever we may be, if we despise Him we shall be lightly esteemed, and if we honour Him we shall be honoured.

MSS Would you say that the exercise and the distress and even the waiting gone through by Hannah would all enter into what you have spoken of as the moral basis underlying assembly service?

AJG Yes, I think so. No doubt in that time of waiting she would be searched in her own soul as to what it was she really desired, and whether she really was considering for God or for herself; she would thus be searched as to her motives.

MSS It is not something to be arrived at easily or lightly?

AJG No.

LAC Did you have in mind saying something about the man of God who comes to Eli before Samuel speaks to him?

AJG Well, the man of God came to Eli in order to emphasize the fact that although God had promised the priesthood to the house of Aaron, yet He was now going to set it aside. It is stressing the moral side. He said, "I said indeed, Thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever. But now Jehovah saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." The man of God came to say that to Eli.

WR What is stressed in the word "before" constantly recurring in the early verses of chapter 3?

AJG "*Before* Jehovah," you mean, in verse 18 of chapter 2, and then in the beginning of chapter 3, "Before Eli." Samuel ministered before *Jehovah*. I think that would mean that Jehovah was taking account of him. And then it says he ministered to Jehovah before *Eli*, that would mean that Eli would be taking account of it. And what a contrast it would present to what had been found in Eli's sons.

JJ I suppose that would suggest that God would have the first place in our affections, because he ministered to Jehovah and then to Eli.

AJG And it is not to be a sentimental thing with us, it is to be a real thing, that we honour God in pursuing the things that are pleasing to Him and refusing the things that are not pleasing to Him.

AT Would verse 18 suggest what is potential here?

AJG I think so, he is called a boy, girded with a linen ephod, and then the scripture emphasizes how he grew. That is, the right idea is there now, he is girded with a linen ephod. Linen ephod is the priestly garment and represents righteousness practically, maintained and preserved by him, so that it is characteristic of him. And that is the beginning with every one of us if we are to have part, either in the service of God or in the ministry or in ability to judge, we must see that the moral conditions are there first.

LBl Would you say what is seen in Hannah is suggestive of the motherly element in the assembly, that which is needed to help lay a moral basis as you are stressing?

AJG I think so, and I was struck with the fact that when she vows she says, in verse 11 of chapter 1, "I will *give* him to Jehovah all the days of his life," but when she brings him to Eli she says, according to the last verse of chapter 1, "Also I have *lent* him to Jehovah: all the days that he lives, he is lent to Jehovah," First she says "give" and then she says "lent," which I think means that while she does give him to Jehovah she is recognising her responsibility to look after him, and so she says "lent." That is to say, she is retaining a hold over him, because she recognises her responsibility to see that he is brought up rightly.

LBl Hence she is seen carrying out her duty towards him in the little coat that she brings yearly?

AJG Yes, exactly. She brings a little coat yearly and *made* it for him, "a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year." And that would greatly exercise her as to her own behaviour, for she has got to be an example to him and

exercise moral influence over him, and to *make* a little coat and to bring it to him year by year.

AAT And as she brought it year by year, it would be a little bit larger, would it not?

AJG Quite so.

AAT So that in the meantime he is growing.

AJG Yes. But you can easily understand that if she was conscious that he was growing and needed a bigger coat, so to speak, that would exercise *her* greatly too, was *she* growing? Because she had got to exercise an influence over him.

HOE It says in verse 35 of chapter 2, "I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed continually." Is that what God is going to introduce in place of what is official?

AJG Quite so. Displacing what is official but bringing in what is faithful.

SW Is it not remarkable what is said of Samuel here and what is said of the Lord? In verse 26 it says, "And the boy Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with Jehovah and also with men."

AJG You mean that that is very like what is said of the Lord in Luke 2? Quite so.

MSS Is it striking that the first thing said of Samuel when he was brought to Eli, at the end of chapter 1, is that he worshipped Jehovah, and then in the beginning of the passage we read this afternoon (verse 18 of chapter 2) he ministered before Jehovah, the thought of worship to Jehovah is stressed in one so young. Would you say something about that?

AJG Well, she brought the boy to Eli. I know it reads as though it was Samuel who worshipped, but it is just a question as to whether it means that Samuel worshipped or whether it means that Eli worshipped as he found the boy brought to him. But at any rate, the service of God, in the expression "ministered *before* Jehovah" and then "ministered *to* Jehovah" is the prominent thought in this second chapter and the beginning of the third. And I believe it is a most important thing for all of us to bear in mind that priestly service must underlie any other service, and if what is priestly is neglected we cannot expect power in any other service.

MSS We have the same thing in Acts 13 where they were ministering to the Lord and fasting before Barnabas and Saul were sent out?

AJG Yes, quite so.

JJ What is seen in Samuel would show that God would use the youthful element?

AJG Yes, I think so, only it is not to remain youthful, it is to grow.

AAT Then it is very encouraging to see a very young brother take up the privileges of the service?

AJG Yes, it is, and take it up with the intention of maintaining it too.

CB Would you say that the maternal element in the assembly is watching for the growth of the saints in this connection?

AJG Yes, I would, indeed, and one is becoming more and more impressed with the responsibility of older brothers and older sisters to care for the saints in a moral and spiritual sense. I believe it is a great responsibility on those who are older to exercise affectionate oversight of the younger ones in regard of what is moral and what is spiritual so that conditions may be preserved among us. And if we are to do that, we must first, of course, look to ourselves and see what kind of example we are setting, and what kind of influence we are exercising.

SW Is it not remarkable in the ways of God in allowing barrenness in any one like Hannah, as also with Sarah, so that exercises of that kind are necessary before He comes in and gives increase, that it might be regarded as for God and not for themselves?

AJG I am sure that is right. And the result is that while there is exercise and rightly so, there is the recognition that it must be wholly of God, if there is to be anything for Him.

AY It is remarkable to see where Samuel is found at a very early age, in verse 3 of chapter 3 it says, "And Samuel lay in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was" - giving Jehovah an opportunity to call upon him. It was there that God called upon him.

AJG Yes, quite so.

RAE How is it that in verse 1 it says that he ministered to Jehovah and in verse 7 it says, "Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah"?

AJG Well, I suppose, as to the fact, whatever service he took part in at this time was more formal than what we have in Christianity which is in spirit and in truth. It would be more formal, and he did not yet know Jehovah, but now Jehovah was going to make Himself known to him, and He began by impressing upon him the moral side of things. One has often marvelled at

that, that to a young boy like Samuel God could speak to him about the evil of Eli's house and how He was coming in in judgment that would make the ears of everyone who heard it tingle. One has often marvelled that God should speak to a boy like that, but He intended Him to start with an impression that evil was evil, and that God was to be feared.

RS It is said that Eli *did* speak to his sons, but in verse 29 God says, that Eli honoured his sons above Him.

AJG Yes. That is the solemn thing that he did speak to them, but had no power with them, and evidently that was the result of his having previously honoured them rather than God. And so when the time came to speak to them he had no power with them. It was the same with Lot, he had no power with his sons-in-law. If we want to have power with people we must see that we are honouring God ourselves.

LAC There was here what was before Eli and before Jehovah, as you have remarked, but there is the statement of what should then be before "mine anointed" in verse 35, "And he shall walk before mine anointed continually." Would that be a reference to God's king whom He would bring in in the person of David, who would take precedence of the priesthood?

AJG Yes, I think so, and I have no doubt the priest is an allusion to Zadok. It may be that both the faithful priest and the anointed are an allusion to Christ, but directly I have no doubt that God was speaking of David as His anointed and Zadok as His faithful priest, because Zadok replaced Abiathar who was the last of the seed of Eli to hold the priesthood.

CB And would you think that Jehovah speaking to Samuel at this early age of the evil of Eli's house would make a very early impression on him as regards what evil is in the sight of Jehovah?

AJG Yes. I think it is very important in these days that we should be exercised to maintain the elementary principle of the fear of God, and regard evil as God regards it, because we are living in days of very great privilege and very great blessing in the way of ministry; and yet from time to time we hear of evil in our midst, showing that Satan is all the time trying to get in, and we hear of things that we would have been saved from if there had been the fear of God. So Solomon in the Proverbs says, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day." (Chapter 23, verse 17).

AAT I suppose it would be right to say that Samuel was the only one in that day in the whole of Israel that got a word direct from God?

AJG We cannot say that, because there is this man of God who came to Eli and said, "Thus saith Jehovah" - so he got a word from God. But Samuel evidently became the appointed channel by means of which God would place Himself in communication with His people.

AAT To what extent in our day do you think, with the presence of the Spirit, could we get communications?

AJG I think anyone who is near to God can get communications, the Spirit being with us, but then that does not set aside the fact that it seems to be the Lord's way, in the recovery of the truth, to give a distinctive lead for the assembly through one vessel whom He sovereignly chooses and supports. But that does not set aside the fact that many may get the word of God for the moment, many may prophesy.

HOE A man of God would be one who has the word of God for the moment, and is not this a word of ministry to Eli?

AJG Yes, it is the word of Jehovah to Eli, exactly. It is not exactly general for all Israel, it is a particular word for Eli.

HOE Is not that how God works. He never lets us fall without giving us a word of warning and pulling us up, is not that right?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AKH Would this verse in Ecclesiastes bear out what you are saying? It says in verse 12 of chapter 8, "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times,

and prolong his days, yet I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, because they fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days as a shadow, because he feareth not before God."

AJG Exactly. And we get Psalms on the same line, "Fret not thyself because of evil doers" (Psalm 37: 1), and so on. Those who do not fear God may seem to get on well for a time, but there comes a time when God steps in and things are exposed.

AY You said a little earlier how God can begin in a very small way, as seen here in Samuel. Is that because, in spite of the failure that was coming in in the priesthood, God was beginning with Samuel in this way with a view to maintaining the link with His people in spite of the failure that was coming in?

AJG Yes, he begins with this small element of considering for God, priestly element, girded with a linen ephod. It is the priestly element that he starts with, and then other things can develop from that. Prophetic power, and the

power for judgment, will all spring out of the maintenance of the priestly element.

JJ So that priests are not only official persons but persons who have moral qualities? Would you say that those features were seen in both Peter and John?

AJG Yes, I think so, I think that always holds good. When we speak of the priestly element we mean the element of considering for what is due to God. Of course, we are able to be priestly as having the Holy Spirit, and if the Holy Spirit is not grieved with us we shall be priestly in fact.

LAC You referred to the public system, and on the other hand that which in secret is for God and His pleasure. Do you think in that connection that the Spirit of God takes pains to record the feelings of a person who can pronounce an Ichabod on the whole thing and do so feelingly, being grieved that the ark of God is taken?

AJG You mean that there are such persons as Phinehas' wife, as well as Hannah, who evidently were feeling things? Quite so, and God takes account of them. But then it is not sufficient in a sense to *feel* things, what is needed is the man-child, that is, the fruit of exercise was a man, not a child, it has to begin a child but it has to grow up to manhood through exercise.

HP And that has in mind maturity for service?

AJG Yes, exactly.

HOE Does the order that you have in mind in these features correspond with the movements of the testimony here now in our weekly movements? First there is the priestly service and the service of God, and then the ministry meeting and the care meeting?

AJG Well, you might put it that way. There is the service of God, of course, on the line of privilege, and there is the service of God in prayer on Monday, and we look that God will give the prophetic word, either in the meeting for ministry or in reading meetings, or other occasions, so that His mind for the moment is made known, and then, of course, there is the element of judgment which is not a matter only for the care meeting, the care meeting is only preparatory, and in the way of ascertaining facts and so on. The matter of judgment is a matter for the assembly. But of course, we all ought to develop in the faculty of judgment.

RS Is not the continual judging of oneself a means by which we develop in that faculty?

AJG Yes, it is, and the fact that every day of our lives, as being in an evil world, we have to exercise it, we have to choose the good and refuse the evil, and come to a judgment of what *is* good and what *is* evil and so on. So that every day of our lives we are to be exercised on the line of spiritual judgment.

CB Although it does not say that Samuel was a priest, it says he was a prophet.

AJG Yes. So it shows that it is not a question of what is official, he was not officially a priest, but it is a question of what is moral, morally he was a priest before he was a prophet.

MSS Would you say there was a general similarity here with what you get in the beginning of Revelation in the Lord's word to the assemblies, that Samuel was in the position of an overcomer? I was thinking particularly of this word to Eli in verse 27 of chapter 2, meanwhile the Lord in His addresses in Revelation is bringing home to the responsible element the fact that they were implicated. Eli was responsible, in spite of the fact that he had spoken to his sons, yet he still remained responsible. Then over against that Samuel representing the overcomer.

AJG Yes, quite so. And then another thing that comes to light in verse 18 of chapter 3 is that he is faithful. It says in Jeremiah, "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (chapter 23, verse 28), and it would be a great test for Samuel as a boy to repeat faithfully to Eli all that God had said to him in the night, but he did it, he was faithful. Eli charged him to keep nothing back, and it says Samuel told him all the words and kept nothing back from him, and he said, "It is Jehovah, let him do what is good in his sight." And immediately after that it says, "And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him," as though this was a consequence of his having answered to the test as to whether he was going to be faithful. God could now entrust him with the prophetic word, so we read that he was established a prophet of Jehovah.

AY In speaking the words of Jehovah, would there be seen a certain amount of authority in it? I was thinking of what we get in verse 27, "Thus saith Jehovah," it is the word of God, and does it carry authority with it?

AJG Yes. Quite so. "Thus saith Jehovah" is authoritative.

LAC This matter of speaking everything in faithfulness. Would that refer to the entire unburdening of exercises at a ministry meeting for instance? Being faithful to the saints in speaking what perhaps one has as an exercise laid on one's heart?

AJG Well, it refers to a word from the Lord. Samuel had had a definite word from the Lord, and it says, "Samuel told him all the words and kept nothing back from him," so that in Jeremiah it says, "He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully." It is a question of having a word from the Lord, not necessarily just an impression, even though it be a spiritual impression. It is a question of knowing whether or not it is a word from the Lord.

LBl Would you help us then to distinguish between the two, an impression and a word from the Lord?

AJG The impression might be a word from the Lord, but it is a question of spiritual understanding, I think, and being near to the Lord. I was speaking rather of the principle as "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." And that is what Samuel does before he is established a prophet, as though he is tested as to whether he can be trusted with the word.

JS You mean a word for the time?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AAT And Eli accepted the word as with authority, did he not?

AJG Yes.

AAT So that in ministry it is not only a word, but a certain amount of authority?

AJG Quite so.

RAE Is there anything to be learned from what is said in verse 15, that after having this serious communication from Jehovah, it says Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of Jehovah, and Samuel feared to declare the vision to Eli.

AJG That shows how serious it was for him, he feared to declare it. And of course, until Eli spoke to him, I suppose he was under no responsibility to declare it. It was a word to *him*, it was not said to be a word to Eli, it was a word to Samuel. Only Eli charges him to tell him and to keep nothing back, and that proved to be the occasion for Samuel's faithfulness to be tested. Is he going to do it faithfully and keep nothing back, or is he going to water it down!

CEH Do you think the seriousness of that which he had been told helped him to be faithful in delivering it?

AJG Well, I think so.

AAT Three things are said, Samuel "grew," "Jehovah was with him," and He "let none of his words fall to the ground." A servant like that would be well supported?

AJG Well, and that shows that things are gradually improving - Samuel grew. Samuel represents the element that is pleasing to God and he *grew*. And then the Lord was with him, the Lord is going to support those who are on moral lines. He is not going to support mentality, He is going to support those that are on moral lines. And then it says, "He let none of his words fall to the ground." I take it that means, that now that God had recovered the right element in Samuel, He secured the right material in the people, so whatever Samuel said, someone was there who would take it on. None of his words fell to the ground, someone at any rate, in Israel, received Samuel's words.

LBl Would you say that the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy along this same line, "Let no one despise thy youth, but be a model of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4: 12).

AJG Yes, you mean that Timothy is enjoined to become authoritative by his behaviour, the features that would be seen in him would lend authority to what he said.

EMs So we see here that things are advancing. First of all, we have the word of Jehovah, but now in verse 21 it says, "Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel." What is the difference?

AJG Well, "Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of Jehovah," that is, it was not simply one communication but now he was becoming recognised, and God Himself was recognising him as a means of communication between God and His people.

AAT What does Shiloh indicate?

AJG Shiloh was where the ark was at that time and therefore it represents, I suppose, God's centre, where the tabernacle was. But it says in the end of verse 1 of chapter 3, "The word of Jehovah was rare in those days, a vision was not frequent," but now the end of chapter 3, "Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of Jehovah." That is, the word of Jehovah is no longer rare. It was rare at the beginning of the chapter because of the moral condition among the people, but now at the end of the chapter Samuel has grown and there are improved conditions, and so the word is becoming available.

LAC In connection with Jehovah speaking to Samuel, in the first three instances it just says, Jehovah called, but finally it says in verse 10 of chapter

3, "And Jehovah came and *stood* and called." The word literally is "stationed oneself." Would you think that there is a suggestion in that that God saw in Samuel moral conditions with which He could identify Himself, to which He could commit Himself in testimony.

AJG Yes, I think so.

RS Then it speaks of Samuel's words not falling to the ground, it speaks of Jehovah's words and then Samuel's words.

AJG Well, exactly, it was Jehovah's word but it was Samuel's words. That is, God is honouring Samuel. Samuel has honoured God and God is honouring Samuel.

HP In the 18th verse of the 2nd chapter when Samuel ministered before Jehovah, would that bring out secret history with God?

AJG I think it would. He ministered before Jehovah, not before the eyes of men but before Jehovah, a boy girded with a linen ephod. That is very good, that it is first of all before God, and that would involve the necessity for the suited moral conditions.

AAT Referring back to the first verse that you spoke of, that the word was rare and visions were not frequent. The twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians says, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ." Is there any connection there, do you think, in the thought of visions?

AJG Well, a vision was one of the means by which God made known His mind, but "a vision was not frequent" and "the word of Jehovah was rare" simply emphasise, I think, that the moral conditions were such that God could not communicate with His people. It was very rare for Him to do so because of the conditions. But then with Samuel being brought in and growing, the conditions improve so that the mind of the Lord can be made known. But visions are one of the things that are mentioned in regard of the coming in of the Spirit, "Your young men shall see visions, and your elders shall dream with dreams."

That is, it is the different forms in which God would make known His mind.

AAT How would you describe a vision today?

AJG I suppose these visions referred to were actual visions which we may not have very often, but still, visions in a general way mean that you can see things. The Spirit of God enables you to see things.

HOE What you say about Samuel's word not falling to the ground is new to us, in that there would be always someone there to take it on. We have thought that what it meant was that what he said would not fail.

AJG Well, I think it might carry that meaning too. But it seems to me that, however good his word was, if there was no one there in Israel to receive it, it would fall to the ground. I think the point is that now God is bringing in recovery in Israel and there were some, at any rate, who had an attentive ear for anything that God was saying through Samuel.

HOE In contrast with the beginning of the chapter?

AJG Yes.

RS Would you think then that his words were to go through from generation to generation without falling, including recovery?

AJG Well, exactly. It is really that it is to bring about right conditions for David, that is what Samuel's ministry had in mind. It was to prepare the way for David. But in a general application of it, the point is that there should be an ear amongst us for anything that the Lord is saying so that it should not fall to the ground.

AKH Would Jehovah's reference to "both the ears of everyone that heareth it" indicate that He knew that there would be in Israel a hearing ear?

AJG That may be indeed. But we get a reference in Amos 3: 12, to the recovery of a piece of an ear, "Thus saith Jehovah, like as the shepherd rescueth out of the jaw of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued..." and so on. A piece of an ear. That is a very low condition of things, that the most that can be rescued is just a piece of an ear, but still that is better than nothing.

CB God would get an inlet if even a piece of an ear was secured?

AJG That is it, and, of course, if He gets an inlet then the piece of an ear will gradually become a whole ear and then two ears.

RAE Would that be proved in the next verse, the result of the piece of an ear, so to speak, is in verse 20, "All Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established a prophet of Jehovah"?

AJG Yes. Now He had really got the ear of the people, speaking generally.

AY So would you say, in that sense, the ear is very important. That would lead on to our day in Revelation, He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

AJG Quite so.

BA Do we see how ready Samuel is to use his ears? He says, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

AJG Quite so.

RS And it says, faith comes by hearing.

AJG Quite. We get two expressions, we get the Lord in the gospels saying, "He that has *ears* to hear let him hear," as though He would stress that He is looking for people who have got both ears, ready to listen. But in Revelation it says, he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies, as though it is a question of having just one ear, and you have not got an ear for anything else.

AAT And is it not remarkable that in Acts certain things came to the ears of the assembly?

AJG Yes, quite so.

SW Should we not be careful then not to be like Peter to use the sword to cut off an ear too quickly?

AJG Well, that is very important. You do not want to offend a person through acting ungraciously or unwisely because it may cut off his ear.

AT Would you tell us the importance of the Lord calling Samuel's name twice?

AJG It is the urgency and importance of the matter, I think. He says, "Abraham! Abraham!" and "Jacob! Jacob!" and "Moses! Moses!" and "Samuel! Samuel!" and "Martha! Martha!" You get certain instances where the name is called twice, "Saul! Saul!" - and in each case, I think, it is the urgency and importance of the matter.

LBl Do you have in mind to suggest, then, the great yield there would be for Jehovah now that Samuel is developing in growth.

AJG Yes, quite so. And the importance of the prophetic word. We ought to be concerned about it, that there should be the prophetic word, the mind of God in an authoritative way brought home to the saints, because it says in Hosea, "By a prophet Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved," so that the prophetic word is used to deliver the saints from the world, and a prophetic word is used to preserve them as delivered from the world, so that they may be in the wilderness for God's pleasure.

RAE As there is the maintenance of the fear of God and what is right in His sight in these moral conditions, this element amongst the saints is strengthened? You have not so much in mind any individual as communicating the mind of the Lord, but this element amongst the saints, that it is a continual matter that we habitually have the Lord's mind, is that it?

AJG That is what one has in mind. The apostle says, "Ye can all prophesy one by one." It is not just a question of giving out something that we have in our mind, it is a question of the word of God for the moment, God's word.

AAT Even a sister could be used?

AJG Not in the assembly, of course, but privately a sister can be used.

CB What is suggested by Samuel judging Israel all the days of his life?

AJG That is another important matter, and that went on all the time that Samuel was living, this element of judgment, and it is constantly needed among us. And so Samuel went round in a circuit. In one sense we must always have an ear for what the Lord is saying, and what the Spirit is saying, to the assemblies; but then in addition to that there is the need to go over what is fundamental. Samuel went round in a circuit every year, as though he went over the ground, over and over again because of the need of it. We have young ones coming on all the time, and there is the need to go over what is fundamental, over and over again.

RS Like in Paul's time, he would go back over the ground that he had covered already to confirm the brethren and to see how they had got on?

AJG Well, quite. You do not go over it again in a dry way. I mean, if the Spirit is recognised there is always freshness. But the ground has got to be covered, so that Samuel covered this ground from year to year in circuit, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah and then Ramah. He judged Israel in all those places.

LAC What have you in mind in connection with each?

AJG I suppose it means that whatever feature of the truth each place represents that would be what Samuel brought to bear upon people when he judged in those places. That is to say, if he judged in Bethel, he would remind the saints, I am applying it now to ourselves, that we are the house of God, that God is dwelling in us by the Spirit all the time, not simply when we are together but all the time. And therefore what kind of behaviour befits those in whom God is dwelling. All these things have a moral bearing upon us. That, I think, is the idea.

CB And to form a judgment as to what kind of truth each locality needs for the moment?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AKH Would the *ministering* before Jehovah and *growing* before Jehovah, and *walking* before Jehovah, be involved in the truth of what you have said about Bethel?

AJG I think Bethel stresses that God is dwelling, dwelling in His house, and therefore what kind of behaviour is suitable to those amongst whom God is dwelling. After all, God has a right to have his house according to His own taste. Each of us who has a house likes to have our house according to our tastes, and God has a right to have His house according to His taste, and therefore we have got to consider as to what God's tastes are, what He loves, and what He dislikes, because we are His house. But then His eye is also upon us and that is really the thought of Mizpah, because Mizpah is a watchtower, but then one of the first references to Mizpah, if not *the* first, is in Genesis 31 where it says, "Therefore was the name of it called Galeed - and Mizpah; for he said, Let Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we shall be hidden one from another: if thou shouldest afflict my daughters, or if thou shouldest take wives besides my daughters - no man is with us; see, God is witness..." That is, Mizpah brings out the thought that when no one is with us, God is seeing. That is the idea of Mizpah, when the brethren are not with us do not let us forget that God is seeing.

RS Would not that bring back then what you were stressing before, the fear of God all the time, a sense that God's eye is always on us?

AJG Quite so.

MSS I notice that that was the point to which Samuel recovered the people, the gathering point in chapter 7 verse 6, He gathered them to Mizpah, bringing in, you would say, the fear of God as a basis for recovery?

AJG Yes. And then Gilgal, of course, is the place where the flesh has been cut off, the cross of Christ, and we are to be in accord with that. And then Ramah, of course, is his own house, and it was an elevated place, I understand, which means that it is a question of our maintaining our own links with God, his house was there and his altar was there.

AT Would you say the altar was the recognition of God's rights?

AJG Yes, it refers to our approach to God individually, I think. So that Samuel judging at Ramah, he would say to anyone who brought any matter before him, or any matter that was not quite right that came before his notice, "Yes, but have you been maintaining your own personal links with God or have you allowed that to drop?" He would very likely say, "If you had been maintaining your own personal links with God, it would never have happened." That is how he would judge at Ramah.

HOE It is a word to us at a time like this, is it not? With plenty of meetings and gatherings together, is it a question of whether we are going on with the Lord individually?

AJG Quite so.

CEH And daily too. There are two references here to days, in verse 13 it says, all the days of Samuel, and verse 15 again, would that emphasize it?

AJG "All the days of his life" - yes, quite so.

AT Would you say that each believer should have an altar in his house?

AJG Yes, every believer should have an altar in his home. It has often been remarked that Abraham, who is the father of us all, and is thus the pattern of believers, had an altar and a tent. That is, he had his own links with God and he maintained pilgrim character.

RS It would appear that the growth is apparent yearly but the conditions daily in the fear of God?

AJG That is right, quite so.

LAC The apostle Paul covered a similar circuit in his ministry, did he not? He touches on the truth bearing on all of these places?

AJG Well, I think that is right. The house of God, of course, is specially brought in in 1 Timothy, and Gilgal in Romans and Colossians.

LAC His own hired lodging is mentioned as a place where things had, doubtless, been on an elevated platform.

AJG Quite so.

MSS Would you connect 1 Corinthians with Mizpah, the thought of loyalty to the fellowship?

AJG Yes, that is good. And of course, in Timothy he insists also on piety, which might link with Ramah.

LOCAL ASSEMBLY CONDITIONS

Luke 10: 17 - 42

AJG It has often been said that this part of Luke's gospel has in mind the conditions found in local gatherings. The chapter begins with the Lord sending out seventy, which is a hint of Paul's ministry, that is, it is something additional to the ministry of the twelve and bringing in greater spiritual fulness, and the ministry was to take shape in places. So that it speaks of every city and place where He Himself was about to come. So it helps, I think, to read this passage in that light, that the Lord has in mind the conditions that He would find in localities. That is that, first of all there is joy in the consciousness of being heavenly, and in the sovereignty of the Father. Whatever measure of blessing or power connected with the Lord's name might be proved, the great thing is to be kept in the sense that we are heavenly, and our names are written there; and that leads the Lord to introduce the thought of what we speak of as the economy, at least to suggest it. The response to God in any locality is to be in the sense and enjoyment of the glory of divine grace, all that lies in the sovereignty of the Father. And then the parable of the good Samaritan is, of course, intended to emphasize that the spirit of care, in the Spirit of Christ, must be found in each locality, involving love that can increase more and more. As the Samaritan says, "Whatsoever thou spendest *more*," as though no limit is placed on the expenditure of love. And then in Mary, of course, we have the feature of the desire to acquire spiritual intelligence, as characteristically sitting at the feet of Jesus. I thought we might be helped together as considering the scripture on those lines. The seventy are somewhat elated, or at any rate, rejoice in the experience that even the demons were subject to them through Christ's name, but the Lord intimates that that is a comparatively minor matter.

AAT Would you liken the ministry of the seventy to Paul's ministry?

AJG Yes. It was what was additional to the ministry of the twelve, and the seventy is a suggestion, I suppose, of great spiritual fulness. So that Luke, as we know, was a great adherent of Paul and imbibed his ministry, and supports it in *his* ministry, so there is a hint in the sending out of the seventy of Paul's ministry which was to take shape in cities and places.

AAT What is the difference between a city and a place?

AJG Well, every place is not a city, of course, but it is to take shape in localities. Some of those localities may be cities, that is, centres of population

and centres of human wickedness, but God would have His testimony even in such places.

CB I would like to know why Satan is brought in here as falling out of heaven?

AJG I thought the Lord was looking forward to the time when he will be cast out of heaven. He said, "I beheld Satan as lightning falling out of heaven." That is, the moment is coming when he will be dismissed as quickly as lightning, and displaced from the position of power that he is occupying at the moment. And the Lord refers to that as showing that the victory over Satan is assured, but He says we do not need to rejoice in that, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

CBl Is it divine grace and sovereignty that has written our names in heaven?

AJG That is exactly it. We could not write our own names there.

HLH When the Lord sent the seventy out He said nothing of this great power they would experience, but He said rather He had sent them as lambs in the midst of wolves. Would that suggest the spirit in which the service would be carried out, and the power that was behind it?

AJG I think so, and the outward weakness and defencelessness in which the service would be carried out. At the same time He does say, "Into whatsoever city ye may enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you, and heal the sick in it." So that He gave them power to heal the sick, at any rate.

HN Do you think the seventy were in danger of falling?

AJG I do not know that there is anything especially to suggest that, only I think it is a voice to us, that even if the Lord gave great blessing in the gospel, for instance, because of the power of His Name, yet, we are not to make unduly much of that, we are to rejoice rather that our names are written in heaven.

CBl Yet we are given to realize that the ministry was followed with power?

AJG Yes, quite so, but the first thing the Lord has in mind in a locality, I think, is to secure praise to the Father. So that it says, "In the same hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I praise thee Father," He told them to rejoice, and then the Lord sets the example, He rejoices.

LAC Would not the Lord's reference here to heaven be in keeping with what would come out in Paul, special emphasis on what is heavenly and the fact that we belong there?

AJG Yes, it would. "Our commonwealth," he says, "has its existence in the heavens." So that the more we get the idea of that into our minds and souls,

the more it is likely to elevate us in our outlook and conduct. It will dignify us and at the same time subdue us, because all is of grace. We could never give ourselves a heavenly position, or write our names there.

RS Are there not two things we are liable to fall into in connection with service? When there is success we are likely to be elated and when there is no success we are likely to be disheartened?

AJG Yes, I think we get that in the gospels. The seventy show the danger of elation and John Baptist in prison shows the danger of despondency.

VB What did the Lord refer to when He said, "Thou hast hid *these* things..." what things did He refer to there?

AJG I suppose it is the things that are involved in our names being written in heaven.

HN How do you view the babes here?

AJG I think it is how the world regards the saints; the great men of the world would regard themselves as wise and prudent, and in contrast to those the saints are just nothing, they are babes. It may well be taken home to ourselves that it is well for us to maintain that attitude of mind and spirit, but not that we are to be babes in Christ, we are to grow up, of course.

AAT As suitable material of the assembly?

AJG Yes, quite so.

CB We are to understand that the Father is the One who has ordered all the circumstances and therefore we should be a people rejoicing. "In the same hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

AJG Yes, exactly. The first thing to mark a locality is that there should be response to God in joy, before any other features of service are taken on; that was the first thing that the Lord was concerned about.

EMs Why does the Lord in addressing the Father address Him in this way, "Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth"?

AJG That fits in with Paul's ministry because it reminds us of the third chapter of Ephesians, "I bow my knees to the Father... of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." That is, there is the wide expanse of things that is before the Father, and then the assembly's special place in that wide expanse, which the Lord really hints at, because He says to His disciples, privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye behold and did not see them," and so on.

AAT In our day, that is, in Paul's ministry we have been taught to address the Father, have we not, as God and Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but here I notice that simply Father is used. Is it out of place for us to address the Father as "Father"?

AJG No, I think not. We have the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry "Abba, Father." That is, Father, twice.

AAT In Mr. Darby's hymns many times the word "Father" alone is used, is it not?

AJG Yes, and we join in heartily, and you feel you can take it up in the Spirit. It may be that it needs a certain power to do it in thanksgiving, and it may be that it is well that we more often commence by saying, "God and Father" because that preserves a spirit of reverence. At the same time, I have no doubt, we have liberty to address Him simply as "Father."

SW Is it not the expression of intimacy?

AJG Yes, and affection, too.

MSS Would you say that in this scripture the Lord is almost directing attention away from Himself and His Name, seeking to exalt the Father in the affections of the saints?

AJG It would look like that. Of course, we know well that when it comes to the service of God in the assembly that has to be preceded by the Lord getting His own place in the affections of the saints, because the service is to be by the assembly under the impulse of Christ, and therefore with a view to that the Lord must be established freshly in the affections of the saints first. But then the Lord is not dealing with that now. He is dealing with the thought of the service of God in the locality.

RAE Would you say that a sense of our association with Christ would bring to pass this rejoicing in spirit, and would set us free to address the Father?

AJG I think so, and especially the sense that all is of the Father's sovereignty. "Thus has it been well pleasing in thy sight," the Lord says.

MSS There is a verse in Colossians: "Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light."

AJG Yes, quite so, though that does not necessarily contemplate the fulness of assembly service, I think that is to be characteristic of us at all times. But this is what is to characterise a locality, that we rejoice in this light and particularly in the sense of the Father's sovereignty, what has been well pleasing in His sight.

SW Would "Lord of the heaven and of the earth" convey the idea of His supreme authority?

AJG God is supreme in authority, of course. He is "the King of the ages," 1 Timothy 1: 17, "the King of eternity," Jeremiah 10: 10. But it is just brought in, I think, to show the vastness of the range of blessing that He has under His hand, in order to stress the distinctiveness and speciality of the place that He has in His sovereignty given to us of the assembly.

EMe And would the idea of "names" signify that each one has been thought of individually by the Father?

AJG Yes, it would. So that Ephesians opens up the thought of sons before it introduces the thought of the assembly. That is, Ephesians introduces the thought of the saints in their individuality as blessed, before it brings in the thought of the assembly as blessed. At the same time, of course, it is the same family, it is the same standard of blessing.

LAC In connection with addressing the Father, should we not be free to address Him in the same way in which the Lord Jesus addressed Him when here? He says to Him in John 17, "Righteous Father" and "Holy Father."

AJG All that, I think, just shows the liberty and variety of expression that the Holy Spirit would produce in us. The Lord had a reason for saying "Holy Father" when He did say it, and "Righteous Father," and the more we are sensitive to the Spirit the more we shall be able to vary our expressions: not as trying to, but as sensitive to the Spirit's touch.

AAT But we would not say, "My Father," in public service, would we? It is "Father."

AJG I think so, "Father," as you say. When one of the disciples in the next chapter asked Him to teach them to pray, He says, "When ye pray, say, Father, thy name be hallowed" and so on.

AY Would you open up the 22nd verse for us a little more? "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son is pleased to reveal Him."

AJG I think the Lord is introducing the thought of what we call the economy, although He does not mention the Holy Spirit, but He is introducing the thought of the economy, that is to say, an arrangement involving mutual relationships which divine Persons have deliberately entered into, with a view to the counsels of blessing for man, which God has formed, being made good. And all that is to impress us with love, divine love. So the Lord says, "All things

have been delivered to me by my Father," so that evidently places the Father as supreme and the Lord in a subordinate place, although a glorious place, but nevertheless a subordinate place because all things are *delivered* to Him. And then He says, "No one knows who the Son is but the Father" - that brings in inscrutability and reminds us that our knowledge of divine Persons is limited to the light in which they are pleased to reveal themselves. So all this is stressing the idea, I think, of an economy involving the movements of love of the Godhead with a view to the blessing of man. And the more we get a sense of that the more it draws out the spirit of worship in the saints.

WH Would it show too the greatness of the Person of Christ?

AJG It does indeed; it guards the greatness of His Person.

MSS You distinguish then in what we get here "the Son," and what we have in Matthew 16 where He is spoken of as being revealed to Peter.

AJG Yes, quite so. This is a question of the Person of the Son, who He is. The Father had revealed His Son to Peter and God revealed His Son in Paul, but then that is not a question of who the Lord is essentially, it is a question of Himself as Man in the position which He has in the economy, as revealing the Father.

RS Would you not say that there has been as much revealed, so far as God has been pleased to reveal Himself, as will serve us for all eternity?

AJG Yes, I would. Obviously the creature cannot compass God, we have to remember that, that we are limited in our knowledge of God to the way in which He is revealed. He has revealed Himself in a most wonderful way, that we might know Him in His love and in wonderful nearness. But then it is morally right that there should be something beyond us or else God would not be God.

LAC In approaching God then we approach three Persons, and would we not approach in the light in which they have been revealed? Would it be then, in speaking to God we would have the Father in mind, and not three Persons at once?

AJG Well, it just depends, I think. In a normal way in speaking to God we would have the Father in mind. It says, "To us there is one God, the Father." On the other hand I think there are times when, in thinking of God, we would have in our minds the whole Godhead as acting together in wonderful unity, although in that unity the Son and the Spirit are known by us in a relatively subordinate position.

HLH The Lord's message to His disciples was, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." Would those two different presentations of it suggest what you have said as to the Father being in mind and God inclusive of all three divine Persons?

AJG I am not sure whether I would regard the expression "My God and your God" as inclusive of all the three Persons, but there are certain passages, for instance, "That God may be all in all" and "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" and "God is a Spirit" and so on, where I think we may rightly in our thoughts include all three Persons. But whether you would do that in "My God and your God," I am not sure, because it is the Lord speaking as Man in relation to His God, I think the thought is that we apprehend Him as Father, that is, we reach the blessing in that light, and then the One known as Father is apprehended by us as God, but it is the same Person, I would think.

HLH To preserve a reverence as you say.

AJG Yes, quite so, and a sense that it is God Himself who has moved out in this way towards His creatures.

MSS Would the use of the expression "the Godhead," in Colossians suggest that that thought is brought within our compass?

AJG The fulness is brought within our range in a Man, in Christ. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.

RS So the same truth applies in regard to the Lord as in regard to the Father. That is to say, our affections for divine Persons are always reverential; however close and rich our blessings are, we have always to remember that they are divine Persons and we are their creatures?

AJG Quite so.

HOE Would the first verse in Hebrews bear out what you are saying, God has spoken in these last days in Son?

AJG Exactly, I think that "God" would refer to the whole Godhead, because it is "in Son." That is, He has spoken, not only in that character but in that Person. The One who has spoken is the Son, He is God.

RS What about that scripture, "God is one, and the Mediator of God and men one"?

AJG Well, that is always good for us to remember, because dwelling, as we do sometimes, on the three Persons of the Godhead, we may be unconsciously a little in danger of losing the sense that God is one, and we have got to

maintain that. It is, of course, really inscrutable, and we have to leave it at that, but maintain in our souls that God is one.

HN All this blessing flourishes in localities?

AJG That is the idea, that this passage has in mind, what the Lord, when He comes, will find in a locality, as it says in verse 1, He "sent them two and two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come." And then in chapter 11 we have, "Who among you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, let me have three loaves, since a friend of mine on a journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him." That is what governs this passage, that the Lord is coming to a locality to see what the fruit of the ministry is, and is it possible that in a locality it will have to be said, We have nothing to set before Him. Now the Lord is setting out what He wants to find in a locality. First, the service of God on this high level, then the spirit of care showing itself in love that will go to any extent, and then the deliberate desire to acquire spiritual intelligence.

HLH The Lord's instructions to His disciples are intended, would you not say, to bring about the condition that is presented in Mary?

AJG That is one of the features that He is looking for.

LBr The Lord coming to a locality is a present thing, what He does now?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AT Would you say it was a climax the Lord had reached in verse 21? It says, "In the same hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

AJG Well, the Lord had just said, "rejoice that your names are written in the heavens," and it seems to me that having said that, it is as though the Lord would set the example - "In the *same* hour, *Jesus* in rejoiced spirit," and then spoke, as a result of His rejoicing, and said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth," and so on. He praises Him on account of His sovereignty, "that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes."

WSW There is a verse in Psalm 16, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage," would it agree with that?

AJG Quite so, you could apply that in a general way, because certainly the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. The portion that God has allotted to us, which is the idea of the lines falling, is certainly a pleasant one.

CB Would "the mystery" hidden throughout the ages in God, be beyond what the twelve had?

AJG I think so.

SP You said that these features that you are speaking of here are to be seen in localities. Have you in mind that there needs to be great exercise with us that these features might be seen at the present moment?

AJG Yes, quite so. That is the idea, because you never know at what time the Lord might come, I mean come in the sense of taking account of a particular place, as to conditions found there, what is the level of our response to God on Lord's Day morning? How much liberty is there? How much are we really in the enjoyment of all that He has in His sovereignty bestowed upon us? And then, how much care is there for one another? How much is love in evidence and really being expended? And then, how much is there a real desire to acquire spiritual intelligence? because the service of God must not only be in affection but in intelligence.

AAT And that care is not necessarily exercised on Lord's Day morning, it is a weekly matter?

AJG Quite so, it is a matter going on all the time, because the assembly is a great vessel of love. The human body which the assembly is likened to, is a wonderful illustration of love. That is, every member in the body is unselfish and contributing to the good of the whole, and many members of the body carry on their service without ever being seen or ever being recognised in any way, yet they go on. And God has given us each one a body in order that we might be reminded that His great idea, is this wonderful vessel characterised by love, because He Himself is love, and therefore He delights in seeing it.

SP The care of the innkeeper is very important here. Do you think that we would be ever able to spend out this two-pence?

AJG Well, the Lord contemplates that we not only spend the two-pence but a good deal more. He says, "Whatsoever thou spendest more," as though to say, I give you a free hand, you can spend as much as you like.

SP Then there should be greater exercise in relation to the care of saints in this way?

AJG Yes, exactly. The Samaritan did not make any demand on the man, he brought him all that he needed. He went to him and had compassion and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, he brought, it all with him.

CBl What does the two pence suggest in Christianity?

AJG I suppose it is what we have in the Spirit of Christ. We receive the Spirit and what we have in the Spirit is there, it is sufficient, only the Lord leaves us

free to go beyond the bare minimum. Two pence evidently was enough to carry the man over if necessary, but the Lord would, so to speak, say, I do not want you to limit yourself to the bare minimum, "whatsoever thou spendest more."

CB There is no limit and that is the way love is ministered?

AJG Quite so.

AAT What does the innkeeper indicate?

AJG I have no doubt he refers to the Holy Spirit, but I think particularly the Holy Spirit in the character of the Spirit of Christ in the saints. That is to say, the care is actually expended by the saints one for another.

BLW He set him on his own beast and brought him to the inn. What do we see in that?

AJG Well, I suppose that is another allusion to the Holy Spirit because it is a question of the Spirit as power, "Set him on his own beast," It is a question now of a man who has been recovered and set up in a new power, so that he will not fall amongst thieves again.

WSW Would you say that was "carrying power"?

AJG Yes, quite so.

WH What is the force of being "moved with compassion"?

AJG Well, it is the opposite to the lawyer and the priest and the Levite. I mean, the lawyer is a legal man, and the priest and the Levite are official, but moved with compassion means that there is feeling, genuine feeling. That is, if any of the saints get into spiritual difficulties you are not hard on them, but you know that you yourself have been in spiritual difficulties in the past.

BLW Does his "own beast" involve the love of God?

AJG I think it is more the thought of the Spirit in the believer recognised as the power now. The Spirit, of course, would hold the believer in relation to Christ - to be to Another - and that becomes power in the working out of it. It becomes power, the Spirit is greater than the flesh, greater than the world, the Spirit is God Himself. And therefore if we will listen to the Spirit in His promptings we shall find that we have power to fulfil every righteous obligation, and we are not overcome.

SC What would the oil and wine represent in our day?

AJG Oh, it is just the way that love would serve. I have no doubt all these are allusions in some sense to the Spirit. The oil would bring in healing and the

wine would bring in joy and stimulation. It is just a question of how we may serve one another in the Spirit.

AY It says here, "*Pouring* in oil and wine," would that be suggestive of the unlimited way in which love would seek to serve?

AJG Quite so, it is not done grudgingly.

HAL There is first the service of the good Samaritan, I suppose that is the Lord, and then you say, it is the service of the saints?

AJG Yes, the innkeeper, which I think is the Spirit of Christ working through the saints, because the spirit of care actually works out in the saints in our care one for another.

HAL So the inn is suggestive of the local assembly then?

AJG Yes, the circle of the saints where we are cared for. It is a temporary provision.

HAL But nevertheless it has in view our spiritual advancement, that we are going to find our own feet.

AJG Yes, quite so.

HLH The word at the end of the section, "Go and do thou likewise;" while spoken to a man who was justifying himself, yet can we not take that to heart as desiring to emulate the Spirit of Christ?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think it is very suggestive that the Lord says, "Whatsoever thou spendest *more*," as though he would say, On this line there is no limitation placed as to how far we may go in caring for one another in love.

HAL Is not that quite consistent with the character of this gospel and Paul's ministry?

AJG Quite so. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved," so that he was moving on this line of "whatsoever thou spendest more."

JHH Would that also be seen in what Paul says in Romans 16? He says, "Salute Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workmen in Christ Jesus, who for my life staked their own neck" and so on. Would that be an example of two who are moving on together in the line of spending more?

AJG Yes, it would. The epistles are very interesting as giving us tangible illustrations. Phoebe is another illustration, she was a servant of the assembly; Gaius was another, and so on.

EMe The details of this care, binding up the wounds and pouring in oil and so on is love active, you would say, in serving one whose name was written in heaven?

AJG That is the idea I am sure, and it is not only love active but it is love that is tender and skilful, because after all, you need a certain amount of skill and considerable tenderness to bind up the wounds of one who is half dead.

EMs The priest and the Levite happened to be on the spot but the good Samaritan was journeying, what would you say as to that?

AJG It is just that love is not casual, love is deliberate. The Samaritan as he journeyed, it was a deliberate movement on his part.

RAE It says, "*Seeing* him" - I think you have been emphasising that. It says in John, "Whoso... *see* his brother having need." In this exercise of care as you are bringing before us, is it not important that we should increasingly have our eyes open to take account of the saints?

AJG Yes, I am sure that is right. And then the next section we come to, the beginning of chapter 11, emphasises the feature of prayer, and of praying specifically, knowing what to ask for.

MSS Apparently he was not very long with the man, he left on the morrow. Would that suggest that the Lord is looking to the saints to take on this matter of care quickly?

AJG I think so. When we are young believers, perhaps, or at certain times of our history, we may prove the Lord's own personal interest in a peculiar way, but in the main, while that interest never ceases, and it is well for us to cultivate what is personal between ourselves and the Lord. He places it on the saints to care for one another.

LAC Is it not that here, in working out the exercises as to the local company, it would be found that where the Spirit is free these varied supplies would be to hand and persons too to dispense them. It is not merely a matter of activity but of persons having something to bring forward which is needed at an appropriate time?

AJG Yes, that is right, involving as we have said, a certain amount of skill and tenderness.

CB So the Lord has put this supply, would you say, in the different localities. He has furnished the position, and that is the position into which He would take one who has fallen among the thieves?

AJG Quite so, but then we become skilful as we make use of what He has furnished. That is, He has furnished the position in the sense that the Spirit of Christ is in us. It is just a question of our recognising that He is looking for the spirit of care to develop among us.

LBr Just like when He washed the disciples' feet, and then He says, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example."

AJG Quite so.

FHP I was thinking that we are tested as to the character of love we have one for another. We find among other things in Corinthians, love seeks not its own.

AJG Quite so, love does not look for recognition. There are certain members of our body that are never seen and go on serving even when we are asleep or even when we are unconscious. Our breathing organs and our digestive organs and so on, they go on operating even when we are asleep, and they are never seen, they do not look for recognition at all.

It is a wonderful picture of love. God has given us the human body as the expression of what He looks for in the assembly.

JHH So that if we really love the Lord we express that love among the saints, is that it? The Lord said, "I was sick and ye visited *me*."

AJG Quite so.

Q The law was originally love, not a matter of word and deed but love.

AJG Love expresses itself in moving spontaneously and acting, but the very fact that the first commandment was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thine understanding, and with all thy strength," shows that God Himself *is* love. He would never command love if He were not love Himself. It is because He is love that He wants love and commands it.

AY As you have been speaking of the tender and skilful way exercised here by the Samaritan on the one who fell among thieves, is this not peculiar to Luke's presentation, bringing out this tender and compassionate touch of grace?

AJG Yes, quite so. We need all four gospels, I suppose, to get the whole truth, but we learn one side of it at a time.

EMs Would you say the lawyer was on the line of Cain, doing something to inherit eternal life?

AJG He was a lawyer, that is he was a legal man, and that is the kind of element that we have got to guard against in ourselves, because legality will

never promote what is for the pleasure of God in a locality.

HAL "Go and do thou likewise" is individual, is it not? All the truth is to be taken up individually in view of what is collective?

AJG Quite so.

MSS Does this thought of neighbour mean one who is directly next to us?

AJG It does, indeed, and that just confirms what we are saying as to these things working out in a locality. Because in a locality it is the saints in the locality who are near to us, and it is those who are nearest to us that test us as to whether love is active with us.

AAT Did you want to say something about Mary and intelligence?

AJG Well, that is evidently another feature that the Lord looks for, because the idea of sonship which is primarily for the pleasure of God involves intelligence. When our children are young we delight in their affection and their simplicity and so on, but you look to their growing up and being able to take things up intelligently, as well as affectionately. So the full thought of sonship involves intelligence, that we may enter intelligently into God's thoughts and appreciate the various features of His glory intelligently; what we present in our worship should be substantial.

WR Would Martha serving and Mary sitting at the Lord's feet show that Martha was showing her love outwardly while Mary's love was in her heart?

AJG Martha, it says, was cumbered with much serving. It is a good thing to recognise that she was *serving*, and she had received the Lord into her house. That is, there was much about her that was commendable, but then there was at this point a good deal about her that was not commendable, because she was getting so occupied with her service that nothing else counted with Martha. Whereas what counted with Mary was that she wanted to acquire the Lord's mind.

HAL This "one thing" is before the heart of the Lord that we should come to it.

AJG Quite so.

CBl Shewing that we might be doing the right thing but not be in the liberty of love?

AJG She went so far as to find fault with the Lord.

CB Would we view Mary as one who had been adjusted by all the Lord had been saying? I mean, the principles laid down here in the local assembly, she

is one who adhered to them and now had become restful at the Lord's feet?

AJG Yes, quite so. Mary is like the heart of the assembly, and she is just sitting at the feet of Jesus as a deliberate matter, that is, it was a characteristic attitude with Mary, that she wished to become intelligent in the Lord's mind. So she would pay attention to anything that He was saying.

RS Does "sat down" show that it was continuous with her?

AJG I think it is presented as characteristic because the Lord says, "Mary has *chosen* the good part, the which shall not be taken from her."

RAE Would you say that this characteristic attitude would find expression in many ways, one of which would be the reading of the current ministry?

AJG Yes, I think so. Whatever the Lord is saying we would want to follow it up and understand it.

LBr That is the way we get intelligence then?

AJG That is it. What the Lord is *saying*. She sat at His feet and listened to His word. His word, of course, is what He is saying at the moment. Not even what He has said in the past, although we want to carry that forward in our souls, but what He is saying at the moment.

AAT I notice the Lord in addressing Martha says, "But there is need of one." What does that mean, one what?

AJG One thing. It says, Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about *many* things, but there is need of *one*, one thing, in contrast to many things that Martha was troubled about.

LAC I was wondering if the feature of the lawyer, the features which marked him, might not in some way be brought forward here in Martha and thus become an admonition to us. And whether Mary's move here was not the first step towards going and doing likewise?

AJG Well, quite so. Martha in a way is perhaps a continuation of the seventy that get over-occupied with service. "And Martha was... serving" - it is a good thing to serve, of course, and love does serve, and any who are fitted for it must take it on "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might," too. At the same time service is not everything.

WR The sisters in the assembly are typified in Mary?

AJG Mary is more than that. She is a sister, of course, but she is a pattern of the subjective condition that should be found in brothers and sisters alike.

EMs And would you say that one who recognises and enjoys the sovereign grace of God would desire to learn more?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that. If we begin to get an impression of the Father as the Lord of heaven and earth, it begins to awaken a desire in us to become intelligent in His mind, in all that He has before Him.

MSS It might have been that Martha had more energy than Mary, but the fact that she chose the good part would involve whole-hearted committal, would it not?

AJG Yes, it would. And it has often been remarked that the fruit of this comes out in John 11 and 12. Mary is more restful in the eleventh of John than Martha, and in the twelfth of John she has real substance that can be brought out at the right moment and the fragrance of it fills the house.

WSW And Martha has been adjusted and she can serve acceptably too?

AJG Exactly.

MC The Lord says, Martha! Martha!

AJG Yes, there is a touch of tender affection in saying the name twice.

CBl I suppose Martha was more occupied with her service to the Lord, while Mary was more occupied with the Lord's service to her?

AJG Quite so, and the Lord calls attention to Mary. Just as in chapter 7 He says to the Pharisees, "Seest thou this woman?" The Lord loves to call attention in localities to elements there that are pleasing to Him.

SH What is said of Martha here is that she had a house.

AJG Yes, quite so, and received the Lord into it, which was very good so far. But then what kind of conditions are we going to provide when we have received the Lord, that is the question?

AAT To what extent does the current ministry that we are being favoured with at the moment, contribute to our intelligence?

AJG That is what it is intended for. It is intended to form us and make us intelligent.

RS Was not the very occasion the means of helping Martha, the Lord being able to call attention to Mary as having chosen the "one thing"?

AJG Oh, I think so, the Lord's intention was not that this should be exclusive to Mary. He would have Martha take on the same feature.

SW Would Martha's complaint be suggestive of a state of unrest?

AJG Well, she was ruffled at the moment, and the Lord uses her by contrast to call attention to Mary.

FHP I was thinking of that, how it is mentioned in the Gospel of John that He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, that we might each one of us covet to be found as Mary was?

AJG Exactly, and He loved each of them separately. And that is evident in the way He speaks here, saying, Martha! Martha! He does not rebuke her in strong terms or anything of that sort, He speaks very affectionately to her.

EMs I was wondering if Mary would suggest one who was rejoicing in the fact that her name was written in heaven?

AJG I think she would. The more we get the idea into our souls that our names are written in heaven, the more we shall want to know about what God has given us, and become intelligent in His thoughts. And not only His thoughts regarding the assembly, but His thoughts regarding other families, too, because they are all part of the scheme in which divine glory shines.

LAC Martha had become distracted through the service. Will it not always be that to us if it does not flow from the happy and quiet sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus, the sitting coming first?

AJG Quite so, and I think one result, among the many, of the way the Holy Spirit is being stressed at the present time, is, that the more He is recognised the more we shall be restful in service.

SW Would sitting at His feet imply subjection?

AJG It implies that, but more than that, I think. You get sitting at the feet of Jesus in chapter 8 with the man out of whom the demoniac had been cast, I think he stresses subjection, and, of course, that would be carried forward with Mary. But the sitting at the feet of Jesus is rather restfulness in order to listen undistractedly to what He is saying.

EMs So that the Son may reveal the Father as you were saying?

AJG Exactly.

CW It says in John 12, "There therefore they made him a supper," would that be the outcome of what had taken place now?

AJG Well, quite so. Her ability to serve as she did would be the outcome of this.

MOVEMENT IN THE TRUTH

John 16: 12, 13; Numbers 9: 15 - 23; Numbers 10: 1 - 10

AJG I suppose what the Lord says about the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, in verse 13 of chapter 16 of John's gospel, is one of the most important statements regarding His presence with us, that is that He is here to guide us into *all* the truth, the idea of guiding involving that we do not get into all the truth all at once, but are led from one point to another in the apprehension of it. But the presence of the Spirit here with the saints has in mind that all the saints should move together. That is, the divine thought is that the whole assembly should be led into the truth - *all* the truth. And I think that is suggested typically in the scripture in Numbers 9, where you have the whole of God's people contemplated as constantly in movement, but in movement with periods in between when they were stationary. That is, there was movement and then an encampment and then a further movement and a further encampment, and so on. And each time they encamped the tabernacle had to be set up so that God could be served according to His requirement, and then it had to be taken down when they moved and set up again in a new position, the same tabernacle but in a new light. And the tabernacle system is really a type of the whole system of truth in relation to which God has come out, and in relation to which His people are to serve Him; and hence, every time there was movement on the part of the cloud the whole position had to be taken down and then it had to be set up again, exactly the same system of truth, the same tabernacle with all its parts, but in a new light, in a new position. And I think all that is typical of the way the Spirit of truth guides into all the truth. The cloud, it says, covered the tabernacle of the tent of testimony, the cloud being the evidence of the presence of God with His people. God constantly came down in the cloud, He did so to speak with Moses at the entrance of the tent in Exodus 33. And when there was a crisis the cloud constantly appeared. So the cloud represents the presence of God with His people, and for us that answers to the presence of the Spirit amongst us.

HLH Would the new position that the tabernacle was in from time to time represent then some feature of the truth that is freshly apprehended?

AJG It would be the result of that. That is, the movement of the cloud involves the opening up of some fresh feature of the truth, and then as the result of that the whole system has to be recast in our minds as affected by that new feature of the truth that has been brought out.

HLH So the many things which the Lord said He had yet to say to them would encompass the whole scope of the truth, would it?

AJG I think so, but then He says, "Ye cannot bear them now," as though all waited for the presence of the Spirit for the fulness of God's thoughts to be opened up.

VB I do not quite understand what you mean by the tabernacle having to be recast each time. What is involved in that?

AJG Well, just to consider the type for the moment, when the cloud moved the priests had to cover the ark and the other vessels that were in the holiest, and the Levites had to come in and take down the tabernacle, all the curtains, all the boards, all the pegs, everything had to be taken down, and it all had to be carried until the cloud stopped again, and when it came to a resting place then the whole thing had to be set up again. It was the same tabernacle in all its parts but set up in a new position. Well now, I think the application of that to us is this, that we have got the truth, you might say, in broad outline, in connection with which God is to be served. God was served by His people in the tabernacle. But then if there is some fresh movement in relation to the truth, the Spirit of God opening up something that requires movement on our part to follow it up, then we have to see how that fits in to the system of truth, and adjust and regulate our thoughts in relation to it. The system of truth remains the same, but there is a fresh feature that we have not hitherto apprehended, and that has got to be taken up and the whole system reviewed in the light of it.

JS You are speaking now in connection with the present ministry?

AJG Yes, quite so, but it has been so all along. Ever since the Lord began to recover the truth this kind of exercise has been going on.

HLH What part have the trumpets in this? Would the calling together there in Numbers 10 and the setting forward be anything to do with the encampment and the journeyings?

AJG When the camps were to set forward, it was the responsibility of the priests to blow the trumpets. That would mean that the priests had to accept responsibility in a peculiar way, to keep their eye on the cloud so as to observe its movements, and also that any bringing of the matter before the saints with a view to causing them to move must be done in a priestly way.

JS You mean it would not be presented in an official character before the saints?

AJG No, not in an official character but handled in a way that shows that those who are handling it are priestly, that they have to do with God characteristically.

CB It kept the people, you would say, in continual exercise to follow the movement of the tabernacle?

AJG Exactly, and especially the priests, because it was the priests' responsibility to sound the trumpets when the cloud moved.

CB That means that a priestly element should be in every locality?

AJG Exactly.

JS You mean then that the priests have the truth for the moment, in that sense?

AJG Yes. The priests are those who are spiritual, those who are characteristically near to God, and you can easily see that if we begin to become aware that the Lord is bringing out some fresh feature of the truth, all those who are priestly among us will be on the alert, and will be concerned to understand what it is that the Lord is saying. They may not understand it all at once but it is their responsibility to get to God about it so that they do understand it, and that they may be able to give a right lead to the saints generally.

CB So the resting was to give the saints an opportunity to enter into the movement?

AJG Yes, quite so, but also when they rested they kept the charge of Jehovah, which means that the whole system of service was to be taken up afresh. So that every time there had been a fresh movement and then they rested the service of God had to be taken up afresh, but taken up in the light of what they had now been brought to.

HOE It says somewhere, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge."

AJG Yes, in Malachi.

SH What is the idea of the blowing of the trumpets?

AJG I suppose it would be bringing the matter to the notice of the saints. The blowing of the trumpets would be an authoritative sound for all the people of God to hear.

VB So, would you say, if we are to move intelligently in the service of God, we have to keep pace with the light that the Spirit is bringing before us now?

AJG That is exactly what one has in mind, and that is to be the exercise with us all the time we are here. This is a wilderness setting in Numbers. All the time that we are in the wilderness we have got to be on the alert because the Spirit wants to lead us into *all* the truth. He is not going to be content with just part of the truth.

TG It says here that "on the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle of the tent of testimony; and at even it was upon the tabernacle as the appearance of fire, until the morning." What would we gather by that?

AJG I suppose we may regard it that the whole period that we are here, the Lord being absent, is morally the night. That is to say, the cloud was upon the tabernacle in the appearance of fire. I think that is to remind us that "Our God" it says, "is a consuming fire." That is, God maintains that character while we are in the wilderness, because the wilderness is a scene of evil by which we are liable to be very easily affected, and therefore God would remind us that He has that character of fire that would consume everything that is contrary to Himself. The Holy Spirit would be with us in that character, He is the Holy Spirit.

TG Would that help us too in self-judgment?

AJG Yes, quite so, that is what is in mind, that we should be maintained in self-judgment as those who have part in the service of God.

AT So long as we are here the testimony is moving?

AJG That is the thought. So long as we are here in this scene the testimony remains in movement. It is characteristically a moving system, not that there are not times when it is not stationary, so that the truth apprehended should be consolidated and made good in our souls, but at the same time it is characteristically a system of movement. And I think we can see the value of that, because that ensures that the service of God will never become cast in a mould, it will always be fresh.

WH That is why it says, "So it was continually"? (verse 16).

AJG Quite so.

JHH Is that why the Lord said of the Spirit, "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak," as though to suggest that He would not always be speaking the same thing?

AJG Exactly, and to show too that the Spirit is here in the attitude of dependence - dependence, I suppose, on the Lord, which is a wonderful thing:

the Spirit here dependent, in *His* ministry, on the Lord on high dependent on a Man. But here it says, "According to the commandment of Jehovah the children of Israel journeyed, and according to the commandment of Jehovah they remained encamped." All was by the commandment of Jehovah.

RAE That follows upon verse 17, where it says, "When the cloud rose from the tent then the children of Israel journeyed; and at the place where the cloud stood still, there the children of Israel encamped." Is the commandment of Jehovah separate from that or does the movement of the cloud constitute that commandment?

AJG I think the movement of the cloud would constitute the commandment to the people, but then in John 16 we find that the Spirit "shall not speak from himself," so that He Himself is under command. "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak." The Lord ministered on the same principle according to the twelfth of John, He says, "*I* have not spoken from myself, but the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (verse 49). So that the Lord had spoken on that principle and now the Spirit speaks on that principle.

JHH That is very helpful because the Lord says in John 14, that "I will beg the Father, and he will give you *another* Comforter," showing that He would be moving on the same lines as the Lord Himself was moving when He was here.

AJG Quite so. And I think as we realise that the Spirit speaks on this principle of not speaking from Himself, but "whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak," it will make us all the more dependent. It will enforce the same principle with us to have an alert ear to hear what the Spirit is saying, because He speaks according to what the Lord has for His people.

EB Would the moving and encamping here depend on how we listen to what the Spirit is saying, to be able to move and to know when to stop?

AJG Yes, I think so. The paragraph starts with, "On the day that the tabernacle was set up," and it was set up in order that God might be served in it. It was not set up just as a kind of picture of abstract truth, but it was set up in order that God might be served, Exodus 40 stresses that. It is very interesting to notice what it says in Exodus 40, verse 26, for example, "he," that is Moses, "put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil. And he burnt on it fragrant incense." And then verse 29, "he put the altar of burnt-offering at the entrance to the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt-offering and the oblation." And then verse 30, "he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet out of

it." There were not only *all* the items of the tabernacle brought into their place, but they were actually being used, they were functioning. There was the altar of incense, and incense offered on it, the altar of burnt offering, and the burnt offering and oblation offered on it, and the laver, and the priests washing at it. So that the whole thing was not just set up as a picture, but as a living system that was operating in the service of God.

LBr What is the Spirit bringing before us today in the ministry, the greatness of the assembly?

AJG Yes, that is one thing that the Spirit has been greatly stressing of recent years, and another thing that the Spirit has been stressing is the Spirit's own personal glory and the importance of His own presence with us. And the importance of our knowing Him, as the Lord said, "But ye *know* him for he abides with you and shall be in you." I believe what that has in mind is that there should be definite freshness and increasing substance characterising our movements in the assembly. And also that we should be fitted in view of what may yet develop in the way of opposition, so that in the consciousness that God Himself is with us we should be ready for anything, and feel that we *are* ready for anything.

RS The stationary time then is just as important as the moving time, because the stationary time is to make good what we have been having before, is it not, so as to prepare us for the next move?

AJG Yes, and also I believe it is important to notice what it says in verse 19, that "when the cloud was long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of Jehovah, and journeyed not." I understand the charge of Jehovah refers to the whole system of service. The charge of Jehovah was the responsibility of seeing that all His requirements were fulfilled, so that meant that whenever the cloud remained stationary the people encamped and put up the tabernacle and immediately engaged in the service of God. For us that would mean that the service of God is always in view, but as affected by the latest movement of the cloud.

EMe So that you would say, what had been gained by the movement all enters into the service and enriches it?

AJG Yes, I think so. Take the truth as to the sonship of Christ, when that was clarified for us, it greatly enlarged our outlook as to the way God had come out in revelation and the relatively subordinate place that the Son and also the Spirit had taken with a view to the revelation, and to respond to it, and at the same time it greatly increased our appreciation of the personal glory of Christ; but it had a great effect upon our outlook upon the truth. And so I am sure, as

we apprehend what the Lord has in mind in the present stressing of the Holy Spirit, we shall find that that, too, will have a great effect upon the service of God, not merely as to personally addressing the Spirit, although that, I have no doubt whatever, has a place in it, but I believe more particularly in the definite recognition of the Spirit at every part of the service, as giving His own character of freshness to it.

SP Your thought then is that we should give more heed to the recognition of the Spirit and to His movements amongst us in the assembly?

AJG Yes, we have to come to it individually in a much greater way I am sure, and we have to come to it in the assembly in a much greater way than we have ever known it; because the Spirit is able to set us together, unify us as we often say; so that in result, as unified, it is not one brother getting up and giving expression to his thoughts, and another brother getting up and giving expression to his thoughts, but it is the same thoughts and feelings moving in the company as a whole, and one brother being used by the Spirit to give expression to what is moving at one moment, and another brother being used by the Spirit to give expression to what is moving at another moment. But it is the whole company in movement, you might say.

RS Is it the same principle as bowing the hearts of the men of Judah as one man?

AJG "One man" - quite so.

LBr Regarding the Spirit in this way then it would remove formality from us?

AJG That is a great thing. During this period of thirty-nine years that they had the tabernacle in the wilderness, God was being served all that time, but yet He was being served at different places, each place representing, you might say, a different outlook.

EB So if the service of God is to be enriched it all depends on the Spirit's place in us and with us?

AJG Yes, it does.

CB Would you say we have had some experience of that? If we were to take a backward look we could see the difference where the Lord has brought out the truth, and the saints have followed the truth. And today the service of God is taken up in a light in which it was not known before.

AJG Exactly.

JHH So that this constant movement and encampment, would it not suggest to our minds that God intends that we should not become stagnant in our

exercises but there should be constant fresh movement with us? The service of God is maintained in freshness in that way.

AJG Yes, that is what is in mind.

VB Who would Moses represent here in the last verse of chapter 9, "They kept the charge of Jehovah according to the commandment of Jehovah through Moses."

AJG I suppose in most of the books of Moses, from Exodus onwards, Moses usually represents the Lord. You might say that the commandment of Jehovah through Moses would be the mind of God, but administered by the Lord. The Lord is the great administrator of things for God.

CM Is it not significant that all this movement was in the wilderness, a place of education?

AJG Yes, quite so, and the service of God is in the wilderness. I think we perhaps do not sufficiently realise the great value of the fact that the Lord is maintaining the service of God, in some measure of suitability to God, in such a world as this is, a wilderness. It is a wilderness because the Lord is not here, and there is nothing in the world to support the spiritual life of the saints save what we have in the Spirit. So that it is a wilderness, a barren scene morally, and yet in such a scene the service of God is being maintained in the holiness that befits it and in some measure of liberty and intelligence. Now that is a very great triumph for God.

JS We are in the wilderness, but according to God, would you say?

AJG Yes, exactly. The first ten chapters of Numbers are the wilderness according to God, then the next section of Numbers is the wilderness in which we find out what flesh is.

JS I was trying to get your point, and I think that it is well for us to understand the greatness of the present time; it is the Spirit's day.

AJG It *is* the Spirit's day, and that means that the whole position here on earth until the Lord comes, is in the charge of the Spirit Himself. That is, One of the Persons of the Godhead has come down to take charge of the position and to be with us.

JS And do you think He is working to the intent, as it is said, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!"?

AJG Yes, I do.

JS So all that is going on in this present day is the greatness of what the Spirit is bringing before us?

AJG Yes, exactly, but then during this period when the bride is being prepared for Christ, led on, the period is being filled out with the service of God, which is what this part of Numbers has in view typically. The Lord Himself was supremely faithful to God as in this world, the faithful and true Witness, and constantly affording pleasure to God, and therefore the Spirit would labour to produce the same features in the saints now, in the assembly, that there should be faithfulness to God, and pleasure afforded to God.

SP Would you say that was what Moses said to Pharaoh, that they might serve God in the wilderness? And then that feature comes down to us in the present day?

AJG Yes, it does, quite so.

DLE Would you say the difficulty we have by thinking that the Holy Spirit is bringing Himself forward is overruled by these words that you read in the sixteenth of John, that if He receives words; so to speak, reverently, from the Lord as in this matter that has come before us recently, it would help us in speaking to or addressing the Holy Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think it is quite intelligible, it is a question of being guided into *all* the truth. You see, when the truth first began to be recovered in Mr. Darby's time saints needed to be established in the grace of the name of Father. They had been brought up in a system of bondage and distance, so that they might have addressed God as Heavenly Father sometimes, but they addressed Him sometimes perhaps as Almighty God, and they were not in the liberty or nearness of the way in which God is revealed as Father, and that had to be established among the saints, and it was established. And then of more recent years, the Lord has been opening up by the Spirit the truth as to His own sonship, and that has been established among the saints. And now, if the Lord sees the need of our having a fuller acquaintance with the Holy Spirit and a better understanding of the place He fills in the economy, it is not at all surprising if the Lord is bringing forward ministry that is stressing the Holy Spirit, because it is a question of our being guided into all the truth, and being complete in our knowledge of God.

HLH The different lengths of time, many days and a few days, what do you think they suggest? During the many days that the cloud rested the charge was kept, if it was a few days they just encamped.

AJG Well, I suppose it just emphasises the need for constant alertness, for no one knew if it was going to remain many days or only a day.

HLH Do you think the period of many days would be determined by our readiness or otherwise to adapt ourselves to the truth or to receive it?

AJG I think it might well be that. So that the question whether there is movement again in a short time or not might well depend on the state the Spirit finds amongst the saints, their readiness or unreadiness to respond to His previous movement.

HEB You have in mind that whether the days be many or few, the service of God should not be allowed to lapse?

AJG Quite so, they kept the charge of Jehovah. But then the fact that sometimes it moved again after only a day, or at any rate it is provided that it might do that, would mean that the priests and all those who were spiritual would be on the alert constantly. Because if they were not on the alert the cloud might begin to move and they not see it.

WH Would that call for diligence on the part of the people of God?

AJG Yes, quite so, an attentive ear, so that the Lord says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" and again "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies."

HLH On the other hand, would not the many days represent the whole period of time in which the Spirit is here, and the periods of a few days would represent distinctive features of the truth that have come to light during that time?

AJG Quite so, so that the position during the many days that the Spirit is here is that the charge of Jehovah is kept, and the service of God goes on.

EB While on the one hand the Spirit is with us, we should have an exercise to go in for *all* the truth?

AJG Well, yes, only we cannot in a sense get all the truth without the Spirit's guiding, I mean, it is no use anticipating the Spirit, going before Him. The great thing is to follow up what He is saying and make good what He is giving us, and then we shall be led into all the truth in an orderly way.

HLH The Lord said that "ye cannot *bear* them now" - does it suggest the thing taken up with some exercise?

AJG Yes, I think it does.

HEB Our not being able to "bear them," would that suggest that the Spirit in His presence and power serves us to give ability to take on the truth?

AJG Yes, I think it does. "When He is come, the Spirit of truth, He shall guide you into all the truth," and that means that they would be able to bear it, and to follow it up.

CB How would it apply now? Would you say that we are not able to take in the truth all at once, but we have to depend on the Spirit to lead us, according to our exercises, into the truth?

AJG Well, yes, but on the other hand the Spirit is anxious to guide us into all the truth, so that it really depends on whether we have a ready mind, or whether our wills are active in opposition to it, or whether we are dilatory or careless in regard of it. But if we, on our part, want to follow on, then we shall find that the Spirit will help us into the understanding of it.

FM Why is commandment mentioned here, it says, "According to the commandment of the Lord they encamped and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed." Why is it commandment?

AJG I think just to rule out any thought of the will of man in the matter, it is a question of the Lord.

HLH To remind us that these things are not taken on optionally.

AJG Quite so, a commandment involves that there is no option.

TG If there is a right state among the people, the Spirit is willing to lead us into all the truth?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that. But then a right state is maintained by us, and helped on, as we really get to God about things. Merely talking about them or thinking about them by itself will not help a bit towards it. But the more we are with God about the truth the more we are helped in our souls, because you cannot be with God and going on with any secret evil or anything that is of the character of untruth. And God requires truth in the inward parts. So that if we want to be helped on in the truth we have got to ponder what the Spirit is saying but we have also got to get to God about it.

CB So the importance of "*Holy* Spirit." Would you say we have to correspond in our exercises and conditions to move in line with how He is presented, the *Holy* Spirit?

AJG Yes, I do. I think that is to stress that He requires holy conditions with those in whom He dwells.

RAE Would you say that those features were seen in Peter? The testimony, the tent of meeting was, so to speak, being taken down and put up in a fresh position in the tenth of Acts? And Peter was praying and also pondering over what he had seen.

AJG Yes, exactly. We were having it in the meetings recently, how he was led into the full light gradually, but he was patient and he was subject and

dependent and therefore he *was* led into it.

LBr A brother might not address the Spirit but yet be following the light that the Spirit is bringing as to the greatness of the Spirit and His place in the assembly?

AJG Yes, quite so. But addressing the Spirit has place, but it is a question, I think, of the liberty and power that we have, and the liberty that the Spirit Himself would afford as occasion calls for it.

SH The expression "recognising the Spirit" is one commonly used, but it has been discovered is not so commonly understood. Would you tell us how this could be brought home to us?

AJG It is easy to use such expressions, but it may be they do not convey much sometimes, but in the tenth of Acts we read that "As Peter continued pondering over the vision, the *Spirit* said to him." And then in the eleventh of Acts, when Peter is himself recounting it, *he* says, "The *Spirit* said to me." He did not say, The *Lord* said to me, he said The *Spirit* said to me. You might say to Peter, How do you know it was the Spirit and not the Lord? Well, I do not know what Peter would have told you if you had asked him, but he knew. He was able to recognise whether it was the Spirit speaking to him or whether it was the Lord speaking to him. And all I can say is, if we want to develop in the ability to recognise the Spirit's voice, we must get to the Lord about it and get to the Spirit about it, and I am sure They will help us, that is all I can say. It involves sensitiveness, as we have often said, of the Spirit's presence, and that involves that we do not allow things that we know are displeasing to Him, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

SH So that as we are in the good of this then, our yieldingness to Him increases?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that, but He has His own way of making His presence a reality to us, so that we know what it is to have an impulse from the Spirit and to prove His support in the assembly as we take part maybe, and so on.

SH What do we learn from the silver trumpets which Moses commanded them to blow?

AJG Silver trumpets were used to give the warning when they were to move, and then they were also used for other purposes as well. I suppose they allude to the power to set the saints in movement or call them into exercise over matters. Whether they had got to assemble to the Lord, to Moses, or whether they had got to move, it is a question of the ability, you might say, to stir up the pure minds, and if need be the consciences and the affections of

the saints, for whatever is required at the moment, whether it is to assemble to the Lord or whether it is to move forward and so on. But the great point in one's mind was that they were to be blown by priests.

HEB And would the fact that they were silver have any bearing on their use?

AJG I think it does. There was that which suggested that God has rights over us in redemption. That is, there would be an appeal to the affections and a recognition of the rights of God over His people.

HEB That is helpful. That would enable us to use them according to the injunction.

AJG Yes.

RG Warfare is mentioned here in the ninth verse of chapter 10, "If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before Jehovah your God."

AJG Yes, well, we get examples in Chronicles of that, how they blew with trumpets and God came in for them, see 2 Chronicles 13: 12 - 17. After all, it is a very great lever that we can use in appealing to God, if the enemy is attacking, that the saints belong to *Him*, He has redeemed them to Himself by the blood of Christ and therefore it is not right that any enemy should have sway over them. You can appeal to God on those grounds, and you can appeal to the saints too. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price; glorify now then God in your body." He would stir them up as to conditions amongst them in that way.

VB You have in mind to say something more about verse 8, "the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an everlasting statute throughout your generations."

AJG Well, it is very important if the attention of the saints is to be called to any fresh movement of the cloud that it should be done in a priestly way.

RAE In the third verse it says, "When *they* shall blow with them, the whole assembly shall gather to thee at the entrance of the tent of meeting." Would that be the ability in those that are priestly to enable the saints to take up a right attitude as to any matter, as taking it up in relation to the Lord?

AJG Yes, I think so.

AY I wanted to ask something too about those same verses 3 and 4, it says, "And when they shall blow with *them*, the whole assembly shall gather to thee at the entrance of the tent of meeting," and then, "if they blow with one, then

the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather unto thee." What is the distinction there in those two verses?

AJG Well, verse 3 is evidently what we would speak of as an assembly matter. That is to say, there may be some sorrowful evil in our midst that has got to be dealt with by the assembly, and the consciences of all the saints have got to be aroused in relation to it, because that is one of the great objects in an assembly meeting, not merely to deal with the evil, nor merely to separate from an evil doer, but that every conscience among the saints should be awakened before God in regard of the evil. But then there may be matters that do not require the whole assembly to come together, but matters for those who are, as it says, princes, as, for instance, matters of care that have to be handled by brothers.

HLH There were several occasions when these trumpets were to be blown, it says in verse 7, "And when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not blow an alarm," And then verse 9, "If ye go to war" an alarm must be blown, and then in verse 10, "And in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts" and so on, "ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings" and so on. I was wondering what bearing that would have? You spoke of the trumpets representing the rights of God.

AJG Well, I suppose it is a good thing for us to recognise that we do belong to God, and that He has rights over us, so that in our days of gladness it is not a question simply of our own happiness but whether God has not a right to a portion from His people.

RS Besides the abundance of evil all around which is increasing, the general state of the Christian profession is stagnation, no particular concern as to the truth. Is it not all the more reason why those who are accustomed to following the truth should be diligent to do so and continue to do so in anything that may come forward, and get to God about it?

AJG Yes, I think so, for the assembly, it says, is the pillar and base of the truth. So that the whole truth is, in a sense, committed to the assembly. On the other hand, it is committed to the Spirit, He is the Spirit of truth. But really the assembly stands out in the world as the prominent expression of the truth as to God, and in support of it too. And therefore it shows how important it is for us to come into the truth, and then express it livingly by the way we conduct ourselves and the way we serve God, serving God in liberty and in dignity, and in intelligence and affection.

HEB So that we have the commandment in chapter 9 and a statute in chapter 10, so that whatever they represent, they would suggest the prescribed order

in which God is to be served in connection with the truth. And the Spirit is the power for it, would you say?

AJG Yes. A commandment, of course, is imperative, but it might have application only to a particular time or set of circumstances, whereas the idea of a statute is that it is a commandment that is written down and therefore permanent. It is on the statute book. So this question of the silver trumpets and the use they made of them was a statute.

SH What may we learn from verse 5, "And when ye blow an alarm, the camps that lie eastward shall set forward"?

AJG And then it says, "And when ye blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie southward shall set forward." But it does not say that when ye blow an alarm the third time the camps that lie westward shall set forward. It does not say that, it rather suggests that two alarms are sufficient and that the other camps are to set forward in their order because the others are moving. So that we ought not to expect too much repetition of the truth before we move, what is suggested is that two trumpets should be sufficient.

TG Would Paul in calling the elders together in Acts 20, correspond with the priests blowing the trumpets that the rights of God might be recognised?

AJG I think that was more giving them a charge to care for the saints and to watch, and so on. I do not know that you would say that there was any blowing of the trumpets for the camps to move in that, as far as I see.

BA Do we not see that all around us there are those who are lagging behind? I was wondering if there are those who are not sufficiently keeping their eyes on the cloud and so on? When the cloud moves those who are keeping their eye on it will move, and those who are not will be left behind, would you not say so?

AJG Well, there is the danger of that, but I suppose how it worked out in the case of the children of Israel was that the priests blew an alarm first and the camp of Judah which lay eastward moved first, according to the divine ordering. And then the priests blew the alarm the second time and the camp of Reuben which lay southward moved next, but then I assume that the other camps would move in their proper order according to the divine commandment earlier in this book. So that even if they had not observed the cloud moving they surely would not fail to observe that the two other camps were moving. I mean, if I am slow at recognising what the Spirit is saying, at any rate, I ought to be able to observe that my brethren are moving, and I do not want to be left behind.

LBr How does that work out in Christendom today?

AJG Oh well, Christendom, of course, is in a sorry plight, because they are mixed up with that which entirely sets aside the Holy Spirit, and therefore you cannot expect movement with them until they get delivered from that system. You cannot expect movement from the saints in Christendom until they get free from that in which the Spirit is dishonoured.

CB I was wondering whether any of these trumpets were blown at Corinth by Paul. Do you think in connection with what he spoke about the Supper and so on, do you think that he was calling attention to commandment?

AJG Yes, I think so.

BA Paul says: "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for war?" (1 Corinthians 14: 8). Would you tell us how that would be worked out?

AJG That shows the importance, if there is any desire to help the saints in relation to what the Spirit is saying, of handling the matter accurately and in a priestly way, and not giving an uncertain sound. But that particular scripture is more a question of preparing for battle. If there is conflict, we ought to be concerned to see what is really the point at issue, and make it clear to the saints, and not bring in side issues. If you bring in side issues you are making an uncertain sound, but if you make clear what the real issue is then you will help the saints greatly.

EMe What do we understand by the trumpets being of beaten work?

AJG Well, you get that in certain instances. I suppose it is to suggest the thought of exercise in order to be usable in this way. I mean, the trumpets in a sense, and the priests who blew them, are one idea, so that the beaten work, I think, would suggest a certain amount of exercise in order to be serviceable in this way.

HEB Are the movements of the camps, one camp moving and then another following, necessarily a public matter? Christendom is moving along with the systems of men, and I wondered if the truth that is being brought out by the Spirit of God at the present time is necessarily public, or whether it is connected with certain who are accustomed to light?

AJG It has a public bearing in the sense that the service of God is covered by it, and the service of God as carried on by us, is, or may be, public, that is to say, anyone can come in. And you hear from time to time of people who are dissatisfied with what they find in the systems, and they leave it, but they go to a certain meeting and their sensibilities tell them that that is not the place,

and the Lord directs them to another meeting and they say to themselves, This is where the Lord is, they discern that there is what is living and fresh in the service of God. It is public in that sense.

EMe You were referring in another meeting to the golden calf. Would that be over against this, the indisposition to move, and having our own ideas in the service of God, cast in a mould?

AJG Yes, the golden calf was just that, it was made of golden earrings taken from the ears of the people, it is the idea of what is divine in the way of truth, which the gold represents, but it has not got any further than the ears, it has not really come down into the heart, and therefore it can be cast into a mould easily, and your idea of God becomes set in a fixed mould. And they would worship that and say, A feast to Jehovah. That is a picture of the condition in the Christian profession where the service of God takes on the character of a fixed, set system of service, with nothing living or fresh about it.

HEB You can understand therefore the value of recognising the Spirit?

AJG Well, exactly, because we can easily get into that kind of thing ourselves if we do not recognise the Spirit. We can say the same things over and over again if we are not watchful, if we are not in the Spirit.

AT I was noticing in chapter 9 that it is an extended period, either two days, or a month or many days, would you say that during that time we are given time for learning?

AJG Oh, yes, I think so. And it is just, I think, to impress us with the need for a spirit of dependence and alertness. We are not to move before the cloud, but we are to be careful not to lag behind when the cloud is moving.

RAE I wanted to ask if the idea of sovereignty would be seen in this passage, in this orderly recovery of the truth. It is a matter of divine sovereignty, is it not? I mean, the times of movement were uncertain, that was in God's ordering?

AJG Yes.

RAE Then, also here, as to the actual movement, Jehovah selected, according to chapter 2, that the eastward camp should move first. Judah, in sovereignty - a right lead being given by spiritual men, would you say?

AJG Yes, quite so.

INDIVIDUAL STABILITY

Matthew 5: 43 - 48; Matthew 6: 1 - 6; Matthew 7: 21 - 27; Matthew 16: 13 - 18

AJG What one had in mind was that these scriptures give us the thought of stability individually, so that we are not overcome by any principles or influences of evil, and then, invulnerability in connection with the assembly in chapter 16. It is clear that chapter 16 contemplates that Satan will be opposed to the assembly all the time, and opposed to it with all the resources of counsel and wisdom that he can draw upon, hades' gates, I suppose, conveying some such idea as that, but the Lord says that He will build His assembly, "on this rock," "and hades' gates shall not prevail against it." But, in point of fact, we need to be built up in moral stability if Satan is to gain no advantage, and hence chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew are so important because they indicate the lines on which we may be built up in moral stability. So that at the end of chapter 7, the Lord says, "Whoever therefore hears these my words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew" and so on, "and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock." In contrast to that, one who does not do the Lord's words is likened to a foolish man who built on the sand. Hence we need to pay great attention to chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew because they establish the lines on which we can be built up as morally stable. And that is essential if we are to fill our place in the testimony, and in the service of God, too, in the assembly. Otherwise we expose ourselves to the enemy and become the means of allowing him to get in in relation to the assembly. One could only read selected passages, of course, from chapters 5, 6 and 7, because they are long chapters, but it is really the whole of those chapters that are in mind, as constituting the principles, as I have said, on which moral stability can be built up in our souls.

CB You mean that all the principles of the kingdom are set out in these chapters?

AJG Yes, that is it, they are the principles of the kingdom of the heavens. It says at the beginning of chapter 5, that Jesus "went up into the mountain, and having sat down, his disciples came to him, and having opened his mouth he taught them." So that they had to be withdrawn from the level of things here in order to obtain instruction from Christ. And He sat down, a deliberate matter with Him, to afford this teaching.

RS Would you tell us what is the meaning of the expression, "the kingdom of the heavens"?

AJG It refers, I suppose, to the rule of the Lord in heaven over those subject to Him on earth. Sometimes in Matthew's gospel it embraces the whole profession, that is to say, all that outwardly acknowledges Jesus as Lord, whether it is real or not. But here in chapters 5, 6 and 7, I think it is what is genuine that is in view, it was the disciples of Jesus that went to Him and received instructions.

LAC Would it be that the mountain would suggest outwardly the thought of stability, that which God has in mind to establish in our own souls?

AJG Yes, I would think so. And the Lord went up a mountain so that He would withdraw His disciples, if they were to come to Him for instruction, from the level of this world. And that is very important, because we all are in danger of taking our standards from men, and from the world in which we move, and one of the first elements in this instruction is the Lord saying over and over again, "Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients" so and so, and then He says, "But *I* say unto you," that is,

that as in the kingdom we are to understand that there is an entirely new standard, a new level of legislation, so to speak, which we are to learn from Christ.

RAE Because the One who is the King is a new order of Man entirely?

AJG Exactly. I think it is most important that we should keep that in mind, that whatever has been said in olden times, or whatever may be said amongst men, it is a question now in Christianity of what the Lord says, But *I* say unto you. It is an entirely new set of standards, so to speak, altogether, and new governing principles which are to be learned from Christ.

CBl "But I say unto you" would set forth the right of His position?

AJG Quite so.

AAT The Lord is speaking. Is His speaking continuous? That is, can we hear His voice today?

AJG Well, I would think so. But I think these three chapters are, in a sense, a complete setting out of the principles of the kingdom.

SW Would you say that the first thing that is necessary for us to arrive at is discipleship?

AJG That is an important matter. A disciple is one who learns from Christ. There is a close link between the thought of disciple and discipline, and teaching. The disciple is one who learns from Christ. And, of course, the

thought of disciple also includes that we are publicly known as belonging to Christ and taking character from Him.

SW I suppose you are referring to what had come to light in the Acts, "they recognised them that they were with Jesus"?

AJG Yes, quite so.

LBr What would make these laws, so to speak, become easy to us? It says, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

AJG That is all met by this, "But *I* say unto you." It is a question of what we learn in Christ. The Lord does not enjoin anything that cannot be learned in Himself.

AY Is "I say unto you" the direct opposite of what is being taught in the world, what the Lord now is teaching His disciples?

AJG That is just the point, I think. You will notice that it starts in verse 21 of chapter 5 and goes right down to the end of the chapter, the contrast between what was said to the ancients and what the Lord says, and in its application to us, I think, it is important to recognise that if what the Lord says is different from what men say, or different from the standards that are generally accepted among men, then our business is to adjust our standards by what the Lord says, and not by reference to what may be current among men.

VB In verse 45 He says, "That ye may be the sons of your Father who is in the heavens." Is that a point reached in His teaching?

AJG It is, a very important one, that we are to be the sons of our Father who is in the heavens. For it says, "He makes his sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust." That is to say, that God is not affected by the good or the evil of those on whom He bestows His blessings. What He does proceeds from Himself, from what *He* is, without reference to whether those Whom He blesses are good or evil.

HAL I was wondering if the first part, the beatitudes, are not the result of all this teaching?

AJG That would be so, I think. The Lord is there setting out abstractly the features of those who are blessed. He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens," and "blessed *they* that mourn" and so on. In Luke He brings it down more personally to the disciples. He says, "Blessed are ye poor" - but here He is setting it out abstractly.

AT In Christianity we should not regard one as an enemy against another?

AJG No, quite so. But still, of course, we may have enemies, not among the saints, but we might have enemies in the world; the saints sometimes have. Not that the saints have provoked the enmity, but sometimes people are at enmity with the saints.

LBr And it is said to love them.

AJG Well, just as our brother has in mind, that we are to be sons of our Father which is in the heavens, that is, setting out what the Father is in a dignified way. Children set out the character of the Father, but that ye may be *sons* of your Father is, I think, particularly placing us in a dignified position.

HN Would you say there is grace for all this?

AJG There is, indeed. Nothing is required of the saints that there is not power for in the Spirit.

HN But things become a real test to us as we go on?

AJG Well, it is very necessary to see that if we do *not* hear these words of the Lord and do them we are foolish people, and sooner or later we shall come to grief. That is the instruction, that if we want to build up a line of conduct that will be supported right through, so that our life will not become disastrous at some point or other, we must pay attention to these words of the Lord and do them.

HLH At the end mention is made of the authority with which He taught, is that a matter of submitting ourselves to that authority in an absolute way?

AJG It would be, I am sure, and the impression is too that they referred to the fact that they felt there was authority in His words from the moral standpoint, that He Himself was all that He enunciated,

and therefore there was authority in what He said.

HN What would help us, I suppose, is to have the Lord before us continually?

AJG And to pay attention to these things in detail, not simply to have the Lord before us in a general way, but to pay attention to these matters in detail, because the Lord is going into detail, understanding the kind of things that we are apt to be tripped up by.

HLH It is a matter of obeying the truth, is it not?

AJG Yes. It says, "He taught them as having authority and *not as their scribes*." That is what makes me feel that the authority there is moral authority, resulting from His being Himself entirely in keeping with what He

taught, because the scribes had a certain authority, the Lord says, They sit in Moses' seat, but they had not moral authority.

LAC Would the beginning of John's gospel, chapter 8, bear out what you are saying? The scribes and Pharisees begin to quote Moses to the Lord as though they would bring Him under the authority and teaching of Moses, but He stoops down and writes, as though He would bring in a law of His own, which would govern the then position and the law of grace would govern the dispensation, would it not?

AJG Yes, it was grace, of course, reigning through righteousness. That is, the Lord in stooping down, I take it, indicated that the law did require that the woman should be stoned, but at the same time intimated by His action that He Himself would stoop down to pay the penalty, so that grace might reign.

HOE Do you mean that we are all builded either upon the rock or on the sand?

AJG That is it. I believe the house that we build is really our whole life, our course here. Are we going through and never going to be overcome, or is it that, through following some wrong principle, the time will come when morally some disaster overtakes us? That is, we get overcome, Satan gets an inlet. It is by the observance of these principles that we build up what is stable in a moral sense.

CB We have to be entirely different. God wants to secure a people who are entirely different from the world around?

AJG Yes, and hence the fifth chapter seems to lead up to this point, that we may be sons of our Father which is in the heavens, and then the first part of the sixth chapter, that we looked at, is the great point of all that we do being before God and in secret. That is, that we cultivate secret relations with God and allow our motives in what we do to be brought into the light before God: that we are not acting or praying before men, we are acting and praying before God.

CB That would be the source of all power, would it not?

AJG And preserves us too.

LBl In His teaching here the Lord takes up matters in detail. Would you not say it is encouraging too that we can refer to His life for the working out of these truths in detail? It would correspond with what we get in Acts, "to do and to teach"?

AJG Yes. At the same time I believe it is important for us to pay attention to these particular details, because the Lord has not said these things to no purpose, and these are details of different things by which different ones are overcome if they do not pay heed to the instructions of the Lord.

FW Giving heed to these things would lead to spiritual prosperity?

AJG Exactly.

SW The Lord had in mind what should be continued in those who are His own?

AJG He has in mind our being built up in ability to stand against wind and stream and so on, that is, powerful influences brought to bear upon us, and it is a question of being able to stand. And the Lord has the assembly in mind, something that will be able to stand against hades' gates.

TG It says in the fifth chapter, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world," would that help us to stand?

AJG Well, that tells us what we are, but then the Lord goes on to say, "If the salt have become insipid... it is no longer fit for anything but to be cast out." Shewing that while in the mind of the Lord we may be the salt of the earth, and we are that if we are going on in the truth, we may become insipid, salt-less. I think the principle of salt is very much a question of maintaining the fear of God in our souls, which is preservative. Salt is preservative.

LBl Would you say just there that that would suggest to us that we are not to take things for granted, but there is a necessity of working out the truth in our lives in a practical way?

AJG That is exactly what is in mind. The Lord said, Ye are the salt of the earth, but then He says, If the salt become insipid, showing that it is possible for that to happen.

AAT In Paul's ministry does Romans correspond to this teaching, because the principles of the kingdom are brought forward, and the boards of the tabernacle are made to stand?

AJG Quite so. The epistle to Romans really develops us after the order of Jesus Christ, that order of Man, and that is what is typified in the acacia wood that the boards of the tabernacle are made of. It all has in mind our being able to stand up as identified with God's testimony, and not be overcome.

HLH When the Lord said in chapter 16, to the disciples, "Who do ye say that I am?" Was it not a sort of appeal to persons who had gone this way?

AJG Yes, I think so. It brings in something additional, of course, to what we have in these chapters, but I believe this is a very necessary foundation, that we should be built up in stability.

HAL Did you have anything specially in mind reading these verses?

AJG Well, verses 42 - 48 of chapter 5, emphasise the thought of being the sons of our Father who is in the heavens. That is something to bear in mind. And then the first six verses in chapter 6 emphasise the importance of having to do continually with our Father who *sees* in secret, and cultivating secret dealings with God. It says, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret," not simply who hears in secret but who sees in secret, "will render it to thee." Not "openly" as the authorised version says, it is not a question of wanting open vindication, it is a question of the Father Himself rendering it to us.

LAC We cannot be stable if we are not real?

AJG No, exactly.

LAC In the fifth chapter, the injunction in activity towards the enemy is to love, bless, do good, and pray for. Would those four things indicate what is inside in the way of a store, a moral store that can be drawn upon?

AJG Well, quite so, but I think it is a question of keeping the Father who is in the heavens before us. It is a remarkable thing that it says that "He makes his sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust". That is, the blessing proceeds from what He is, regardless of the character of those on whom it is bestowed.

HOE All those things are acting like God, and if we are sons of God we are supposed to act like God.

AJG Exactly.

EMe So, if we understand this we would be in a better position for these features to be worked out inwardly for the pleasure of God?

AJG Exactly, and then the importance of cultivating secret relations with God, and not doing things before men, but cultivating relations with God who *sees* in secret.

TG Would that be seen in David and Saul?

AJG Yes, exactly, it was. David evidently knew what it was to cultivate secret relations with God, Psalm 139, amongst others of his writings, shows that,

that he knew what it was to be much in the presence of God, and God who sees in secret, He not only hears but He sees.

CM Would you say that in the fifth chapter where the Lord took a deliberate position in sitting, and then opening His mouth, is that not an example of stability?

AJG I think His sitting down shows how important it was, that He was deliberately taking up this attitude with a view to imparting this instruction. And "having opened his mouth," would probably convey that all that He was saying proceeded from Himself, so that the truth may be learned *in* Himself.

WH And would you say this teaching was not to the crowd, but only to the disciples?

AJG It was only to the disciples.

AAT I notice that after the thought of "seeing" in secret, that He goes on to the prayer. It is often referred to as the Lord's prayer, but I suppose it is really the disciples' prayer, is it not? "Our Father who art in the heavens, let thy Name be sanctified." I was wondering why He had to educate them as to the exact words to use.

AJG The Spirit had not come, of course. It would be a poor thing to do just what they do in system and repeat this verbally, because we have the Spirit, and the Spirit of adoption too. So that we ought to be able to pray intelligently and according to God without having a set form to follow. But then, the Lord gave them this prayer because they had not at this time the Spirit, and in order to set out the lines upon which we should pray. The first thing is, Let Thy Name be sanctified. Now how often do we really pray that? One has challenged oneself lately as to that, as to how much that comes to our minds as a first thought, that the Father's Name is to be sanctified.

AKH Is that connected with preserving in us the fear of God?

AJG Quite so.

AKH Say a little more about the Father's Name being sanctified?

AJG Well, we bear that Name. We are in the world as those who know God and therefore we bear that Name, and it is a serious thing if that Name is in any way besmeared, or blasphemed, which, of course, is worse. The Name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles on account of the conduct of the Jews, which was a very serious matter. But we should see that the Father's Name is sanctified, that is, as bearing that Name we are in keeping with the holiness of the Father's Name.

LBr We should not do anything to cause persons to blaspheme the Name of the Father?

AJG That would be a very serious matter.

WT The Lord Himself, when speaking to the Father, says, "Holy Father."

AJG Yes, exactly, and He speaks of Himself as His Holy One.

JHH I wondered if there was anything more in your mind in connection with the fact that the Father sees in secret, not only hears but He sees.

AJG Well, for one thing, if we are conscious that the Father *sees*, we do not need to say a great deal in our prayers, bring the matter before God,

whatever the matter is, because He *sees* the whole position, He is not dependent on what He hears to understand what is needed, He sees the whole position. But then He sees us too, and He sees what is in our hearts. The Psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," Psalm 66: 18, so all that enters into it - that He sees in secret. That is to say, He would give us the sense that it is a matter between Him and me individually; that is to be cultivated by us.

JHH As we get into His presence, it is there that we have God's view of things, and our motives are exposed?

AJG That is it, exactly.

JHH I was noticing that Nehemiah when he prays, he says a thing that we very seldom say, he asks God to hear, "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open," Nehemiah 1: 6. So that you have the two thoughts there, there is the thought of hearing and seeing, as though we would invite divine scrutiny into our very motives, to have the Lord give us His approval or otherwise.

AJG And that is very preservative.

RS Does not the Psalmist's calling upon God to "search" him come into it too?

AJG That is what I had in my mind a moment ago in referring to Psalm 139.

AAT The eighteenth verse again brings in the thought of seeing in secret, but in connection with fasting.

AJG Yes, we get it three times, this thought of His seeing in secret, and the great thing is to cultivate what is secret between our souls and God.

HOE In connection with the Father's Name being sanctified, is that not an attitude that is to be characteristic *in* us? It is not only a matter of how it

affects others, but it is how we regard it in ourselves.

His Name sanctified with us and in us as having the Holy Spirit.

AJG Yes, indeed. And then, "Let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done as in heaven, so upon the earth," all that before it is a question of our needs.

CW As these relationships with God are cultivated, would it give us the power to love our enemies?

AJG Yes, but it would help us in every way, because it would preserve us from the beginnings of anything wrong, and preserve us from the subtle desire to do things before men or before the brethren, to receive approval of men or even of the brethren. It would preserve us from everything of that kind.

AAT This is not assembly prayer, is it?

AJG No, it is a question, I suppose, of what is individual. Although there is no reason why we should not pray in assembly that the Father's Name should be sanctified.

AAT I was thinking of the individual needs.

AJG Quite so. Now in chapter 7 it leads up to what we have already referred to as to the Lord saying that the one who hears His words and does them is likened to a prudent man who built his house upon the rock, and although it might be tested and powerful influences brought to bear upon it, it stands, because it is founded upon the rock. That is, it is founded on principles that God Himself approves of, and that are, in fact, in moral keeping with what God is. And therefore such an one will never fall.

AY The Lord's mind is that the saints should be nothing less than what He Himself is, so that when the test comes along they will be able to stand the test as He stood it. The winds blew against Him and the waves swept over Him but He stood it.

AJG Quite so. The Lord has in mind the assembly as that which is to stand here as "My assembly," He says, in service God-ward and in testimony man-ward; it is to stand in spite of all Satan's influences brought to bear upon it.

CB Would you say these features that are set out in these chapters are carried forward in the assembly and hades' gates cannot prevail against such features?

AJG That is it, because after all the assembly is composed of individuals. They are built together by the Holy Spirit but are still individuals; and if one of us fails on these moral lines, Satan gets in by that means, he gets an advantage.

HAL Do you think the suggestion of building the house on the rock refers to Himself?

AJG I do not think I would put it that way. It is more a question of building it on the rock, what is firm and cannot be shaken, in contrast to the sand; it is a question of a foundation that will stand. Of course, you might say it is Christ, but it is a question really of being built up on sound principles, principles that are of God. It says in Timothy, "The firm foundation of God stands," an abstract idea. It is a foundation that is of God, and that will always stand.

LBr This is a foundation, then, on which we build ourselves?

AJG Exactly. In a way, your house, according to this verse, is just your life, your course here, and it is to stand, there is not to be any disaster of a moral kind overtake it.

VB I was looking at verse 22 of chapter 7 as regards what a person might do with regard to prophesying, "Have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons" and so on, but the Lord says, "I never knew you." Those details that we have been speaking of were not in evidence apparently with those persons, would you say?

AJG No, I would say that exactly. That is the point in this passage, that we may be going on with things outwardly and saying, "Lord, Lord," and it even contemplates the possibility of effecting things in the power of His Name, and yet being a worker of lawlessness. And the Lord has to say, "I never knew you. Depart from Me." So that it all stresses the importance of genuineness and being governed by these principles, and not resting in anything that is outward.

LAC The pursuit of what you have suggested in attending to details, even to the matter of thoughts, as is covered in this part of Matthew, would call for continual self-judgment, would that not be the digging, so to speak, into the rock for this foundation?

AJG Yes, I think it would.

EB I was wondering if it is not noticeable that the test is put on both of these buildings?

AJG Yes, you mean the building on the rock and the building on the sand, they both alike are tested? Exactly. Well now, in chapter 16, it is a question not of principles but of the appreciation of the Person of Christ. The Lord says, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" And they give various replies, and then He says, "But *ye*, who do ye say that I am? And Simon Peter answering said, *Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus

answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens. And I also, I say unto thee, that *thou* art Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly." So I take it the rock really refers to the appreciation of Christ in the soul of Peter, and in the souls of the saints.

LAC Would the Lord Jesus Himself here be in any way viewed as the prudent Man, building on the rock?

AJG I would not care to apply that thought to Him. Of course, He does build on a rock that which is impregnable. He says, "On this rock I will build my assembly and hades' gates shall not prevail against it."

CBl He could not do otherwise than that?

AJG No, the Lord does not build on an unstable foundation or a worthless foundation, so that there is the work of God in Peter's soul, the revelation of the Father, and there was something there therefore that was stable, impregnable indeed.

CB Do you think the Lord's question, "But *ye*, who do ye say that I am?" was to bring out what he had got from the Father?

AJG I think so. And then He not only brings out through Peter the truth as to His own Person, but He also tells Peter the truth about Peter, that "thou art Peter," that is, a stone. He wants Peter to get a right idea about himself as well as a right idea about Christ, which is another important matter.

AY Would you say that this thought that we see here in chapter 16, is made good in the soul of Peter and is carried forward in his epistles when he said, "To whom coming, a living stone," and "yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God"?

AJG Yes, I would, there is no doubt that that part of his epistle is based on what he confesses here in this chapter and what the Lord says to him.

RS Would you say what is the difference between "this rock" and Peter a "stone"?

AJG I suppose there is a certain affinity between the idea of Peter as a stone and the thought of the rock. The rock, I suppose, refers to what the Father had wrought in Peter's soul in the appreciation of Christ. But then, as having been wrought upon thus by God, we are to understand that we ourselves are material for the spiritual house, that we are *it*. He wanted Peter to understand that he was a stone.

RS Is it then that Christ is taking on persons who are subjects of the work of God?

AJG That is it, exactly. So that our business is to learn how to fit into this spiritual structure for which we have been fitted by the Father's work.

HOE Is not this whole matter a question of values according to God? In the earlier chapters it is "sons of your Father who is in the heavens," and now here it is a revelation of God to Peter, and it is all recognised and has a great value in the sight of God.

AJG Yes, quite so, and also a great value in the Lord's sight, because He says, "And I also, I say unto thee."

HLH Would that word to Peter, "Thou art Peter," be a substantive answer to the revelation made to him?

AJG I think it would. That is, that the revelation was effective in Peter, he had it there in his soul, and nothing would allow him to give it up, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God.

HLH Is that the way that things are worked with us, that is to say, we get a certain measure of light and then there is an answer in substance in what is built in our souls?

AJG Yes, I think so. And the appreciation that Jesus is *the* Christ, that is, *the* approved of God, *the* anointed of God, involves that every other man is set aside. There is only one Christ, there are many antichrists but there is only one Christ, and therefore if we really get into our souls that Jesus is the Christ it means that every other man is set aside; it means, that the first man has got to be repudiated in our own souls.

HOE That is what I meant by values.

AJG Quite so.

HAL What did the Lord mean when He said to him, "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee"?

AJG Just that he had not got it by man's teaching or anything of that sort. "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens." A definite revelation in Peter's soul by the Father as to the Person of Christ, and I think we can take that up, because the Lord says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," that is He calls him by his ordinary name as known amongst men. But He says, You are blessed because you have this light in your soul. And every one of us who has divinely given light in his soul as to

Christ, ought to think of himself in that way, that we are blessed compared with our neighbour who has not got it.

LBl So that it was not a mere expression of words, but this statement corresponded with the moral state that was there, would you say?

AJG I would. And not only the moral state but really what was there in Peter's soul as a result of the Father's work. The Father had wrought in Peter to give him this light as to Christ. And everyone of us who has a true appreciation of Christ, whatever the measure, as a result of the Father's sovereign work in us, ought to take account of it, that God has done that for some purpose, not simply that we might go to heaven when we die, but that we might fit into the assembly, that is what God has in mind.

AAT And the Son of the living God is a Man?

AJG Quite so. His sonship is in manhood, and did not exist until He became Man, but He is Son of the living God, that is to say, He is the centre of a system of living affections of which God is the Source.

LBr Having this knowledge of Christ in our souls, what men say about Him cannot affect us?

AJG Quite so.

RS And is it not so then, since we as believers are subjects of God's work, that there is capability there for pursuing the truth and fitting into the assembly intelligently?

AJG There is, and I believe it would help us greatly if we would just lay hold of it, that God has sovereignly wrought in our souls, and now you say to yourself, If that is so, and my neighbour next door has not been wrought in in this way, why is it? And the answer is that God intends us to be a living stone in this spiritual house, and to have part in His service; every brother and every sister is to function in it livingly.

EMe So what Peter says, "To whom coming," would not apply to every believer but only to those who are moving livingly, would you say?

AJG I think so. It is not coming in the initial way as sinners coming to Christ, I think it is rather what is characteristic, "To whom coming" - like Peter leaving the boat to go to Jesus.

AT Is it the Spirit's work that the Lord Jesus should be known as the Son of God?

AJG Everything that is wrought in us is by the Spirit, even new birth is the Spirit's work. It is all the Spirit's work.

AT I was thinking of Ephesians, "Until we all arrive... the full grown man."

AJG The full grown man, the knowledge of the Son of God? Quite so. The Son of God, as Mr. Taylor has said, is God's great ideal. His great ideal in manhood is set out in the Son of God, and His work in souls has in mind no less standard than our being brought into accord with the Son of God.

LAC I was thinking of the Spirit's place in connection with all that you were saying, and wondered whether the streams and the wind as you referred to in chapter 7, no doubt suggestive of the independent influences all controlled by hades' gates and suggestive of Satan's opposition, would not be exactly in contrast to the Spirit's influence as seen perhaps in the type of the river; the result of which builds up that in the souls of the saints which is impregnable?

AJG Yes, I would think that.

HAL The angel had said He would be the Son of the Highest. Would "Son of the living God" be connected with that?

AJG I think the stressing of the "living God" is to stress that it is a living system, a system of holy affections centring in the Son, because all around us there is the professed divine service, and divine worship, as it is called, but very largely a dead system. It is dead formality and God is not known. Whereas Peter says, Thou art the Son of the living God.

CB Was what was given to Paul on the same level? He says, "it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him."

AJG I would think it is much on the same level. "The Christ" would involve that the assembly is set up in complete independence of man and of the world, all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in the Christ, and the assembly is complete in Him, and does not need anything from man or from man's world. And the "Son of the living God" would involve that we have our part in a system of living affections as characterised by liberty, the liberty of sonship. And you can easily understand that if the assembly is held under the influence of Christ and deriving influence and direction from Him, and in liberty too, then Satan will not gain an advantage.

SW Would you tell us what you have in mind in using the term "the Christ"?

AJG That is what Peter says, "Thou art *the Christ*." It is simply marking Him out in that distinctive way as *the* anointed One of God. He has no rival. There are not two Christs.

AAT While this revelation is made to Peter, is it not so that Peter in his ministry says very little about the Son of the living God?

AJG Yes, it is, which would show that a servant does not necessarily bring out all that is in his own soul. He is governed in his service by what the Spirit directs in relation to the needs of those to whom he is ministering.

SW Would you not say that the character of Peter's service would not necessitate the bringing in of that line of truth?

AJG Quite so.

LAC The Lord's question here is as to Himself as Son of man, but the revelation from the Father brings in the statement which brings Him before us as the Son of the living God. I was just wondering if the revelation from the Father almost, so to speak, went beyond the Lord's own question of what would have been applicable to the general thought and opinion, bringing in something entirely new, new even to the disciples?

AJG The Lord habitually spoke of Himself as the Son of man in the gospels. He would not allow Himself to be spoken of as "the Christ" until He was risen from the dead, for if He had allowed Himself to be spoken of publicly as the Christ while He was still here, men would have thought that He had come in to adorn man in the flesh. And so the Lord would not allow them to make Him known as the Christ until He was risen from the dead.

BA The Lord asked the disciples the question but Peter answers for them all.

AJG Well, I have no doubt it genuinely represented what they all had, except Judas Iscariot, but Peter is taken up as a sample man, especially in Matthew.

MC Is not what was given to Peter, the light of Christ as "Son of the living God," what the Spirit is seeking to put into our souls?

AJG I think so. And if any of us feel that we do not really understand what is involved in "the Christ, the Son of the living God," let us get to the Father about it. He revealed it sovereignly to Peter, and He will be quite pleased to make it effective in our souls too. Why not get to the Father about it? The Father loves us to be specific in our prayers, and if anyone does not really understand what is involved in the Christ the Son of the living God, get to the Father about it in secret, and tell Him that you want to understand what is involved in "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

HOE Is not that a pre-eminent truth that the Spirit would lead us into?

AJG I think so.

HN So that these two thoughts of stability and invulnerability are not general, but would call for individual exercise and prayer?

AJG Quite so.

EMe Would the Lord in saying, "But *my* Father who is in the heavens" indicate that He wanted to put His disciples in touch with the Father also, livingly?

AJG Well, yes. Then He goes on to say, "I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter." That is very interesting to me, that Peter has now a right view of Christ, and now the Lord says, I want you to have a right view of yourself as a subject of the work of God. It is very important that we should have a right view of ourselves as subjects of the work of God, that if God has wrought in us in that way He intends every one of us to be a living stone: not a mere listener at the meetings or an onlooker, but one who is capable of living affections towards Christ and towards God, capable of receiving impulses by the Spirit, capable of contributing to the wealth there is in the company.

HN We want help on that, I think.

AJG Well, it is a question of what the Lord would say to Peter, "I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter." If the Father has wrought in our souls, why is it? What has He in mind in working in our souls?

LAC Is it not in that way very blessed to dwell upon the substantial character of Christianity, whether whatever is presented objectively in its completeness as here in chapter 16, must be worked out in stability down to the very details of the earlier chapters as you spoke?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AY I am glad you stressed that, I wanted to ask earlier if we might not learn something from this expression of the Lord. Perhaps you would tell us a little more about it?

AJG Well, that is all that I see at the moment. The Father has given this revelation to Peter, which resulted in Peter having a right appreciation of Christ. Now the Lord says, I have something to say to you, and what I want you to have is a right appreciation of yourself, as being the subject of the work of God.

LBl And part of the material used in the building of the assembly?

AJG Exactly. The Father's revelation had constituted him as suitable material for the spiritual house, which is made of living stones.

RS These lines are very helpful because the general disposition of the saints is to take account of ourselves as forgiven sinners, and even when thinking of

the work of God in sovereignty it is mostly in view of knowing our sins forgiven.

AJG Exactly, and on the other hand what God has in mind, and what the Lord has in mind, is the assembly. The Lord calls it "My assembly," and it is to stand here, the constant butt of the enemy's attack, and yet impregnable as the vessel of service God-ward and the vessel of testimony man-ward.

HOE I suppose Peter is in the good of the principles of the kingdom in the earlier chapters that we have been looking at?

AJG I am sure that is contemplated. We know that Peter broke down and failed from time to time, but he was recovered, but I have no doubt that characteristically he was formed by what the Lord said in chapters 5 - 7.

LAC Is that not substantiated in the Lord's own statement to Peter, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee." Would that not suggest that what was connected with what was merely sensual and the natural impulse of a man like Peter is judged, so that he was no longer under the influence of what was connected with flesh and blood.

AJG And yet immediately after that in verse 23, we find the Lord saying to Peter, "Get away behind me, Satan," showing how quickly we may become someone that Satan can use if we are not watchful. He allowed himself to be governed by mere sentiment and natural considerations, and thus became someone that for the moment Satan could use.

RS Was that not dropping down to the "Simon Bar-jona" line?

AJG Yes, quite so.

AAT The expression, "My assembly," would that give us the authority to say "Christ's assembly"?

AJG Yes, I would think so.

AAT Is there any other scripture in the New Testament where the assembly is spoken of as "Christ's assembly"?

AJG Well, "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it... that he might present the assembly to himself glorious." It is spoken of as the assembly of God also, especially in its public character - "The assembly of God which is in Corinth." But I think the Lord says, "My assembly" here, viewing it as in testimony, because it means so much to the Lord that He has a vessel here which He can employ in the service of God in the very presence of evil.

WH Would you say, "Upon this rock *I* will build" shows divine authority?

AJG "I say unto thee" is authoritative, and "*I* will build" is, in a sense, a challenge to Satan, "I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it."

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE

John 20: 1 - 23

AJG It is clear that this chapter leads us to the full thought of Christian privilege indicated in the message which the Lord sent to the disciples by Mary, and I thought the Lord might help us to see the way that the truth has gradually been opened up, for that, I think, is what the chapter develops. The end of chapter 19 shows that there is a public position taken up in fidelity to the Lord, certain women standing by the cross of Jesus, and too, in Joseph and Nicodemus committed, you might say, to the fellowship of His death. So a public position is established in fidelity to Christ. But now in chapter 20 we have Mary Magdalene brought forward as a central figure, evidently possessing the feature of affection for Christ that is not satisfied with mere truth, however precious the truth, but is attached to Christ personally. And that is really what is to be developed in the assembly, and becomes the secret of entrance into the greatest privileges, because we enter into our greatest privileges with Christ, and in no other way. So the chapter starts with early morn while it is yet dark. That is, that there is an absence of light, but the light is gradually going to increase, and what is to be noted is that at the outset great attention is paid to the tomb, that is to the death of Christ, and as there is continual occupation with His death, the import of it and the glory to be apprehended in connection with it increases. But then there comes a point when the Person of Christ becomes, as it were, a necessity, to Mary Magdalene, and it is then that the whole truth is opened up. It is well that we should be established in fundamentals in regard of the death of Christ, so that we might be led on to an appreciation of who it is that has lain in death and what was in mind in His having lain there, and risen again. The stone taken away from the tomb was what Mary Magdalene saw as she arrived, which evidently meant that liberty was being given to look into the matter of the tomb. That is, the truth was going to be made clear as to all that might be apprehended as the fact of the Son of God having died is contemplated.

HN What is involved in the fundamentals you referred to?

AJG Well, we read that Mary goes to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and as a result they run to the tomb, and it says, "The two ran together, and the other disciple ran forward faster than Peter, and came first to the tomb, and stooping down he sees the linen cloths lying." That was the first thing he saw, the first apprehension of the death of Christ - the linen cloths lying. I think that is a testimony to righteousness established. Linen is always that in scripture, and that is the first thing. So that if there is to be

anything built up in the way of the service of God in our souls, we have first to see how God has come in in Christ to establish a basis in righteousness on which He can work out His thoughts. So the first thing he saw was the linen cloths lying, but it says, he did not go in.

AT Would you say there are features of energy seen here in both Mary and the disciples?

AJG Yes, I would think so, and that is another thing which comes out. We are told that these two disciples ran together but one ran faster than the other, and then on the other hand, the other when he did arrive, went in further than the one. So that it is just to indicate that we find that kind of thing in the assembly; that some seem to be able to embrace the truth more quickly than others, others may go into it more deeply, but we have to go on together, that is the great thing.

HN Would repentance and faith come in in regard to the fundamentals?

AJG That is our side of it, but this is not exactly presenting our side of it, I think, it is rather presenting what it is that God is setting before us in relation, first of all, to the death of Christ, and then to the Person of Christ. He has great things in mind to bring us into, but He works, you might say, systematically and lays a firm foundation first.

HLH So that the affection that is characteristic of Mary is attached also to the disciples, underlying all these activities there is affection seen too?

AJG I have no doubt there is, but the Spirit of God seems to make so much of Mary at first in contrast to the disciples, they are content with a certain measure of light and go to their own homes, but Mary is not content with anything short of the Lord personally. So that she seems to be the one who is taken up to set out the truth in its fulness.

VB Simon Peter having gone in saw more than the other disciple. Would you tell us what is involved in the handkerchief not lying with the linen cloths but in a separate place by itself? What he saw in addition to what the other disciple saw.

AJG I think the chapter is intended to help us to patiently go into things more deeply. Of course, that involves prayer and seeking the Lord's help and the Spirit's help. But if we will go into things more deeply we shall find we shall see more. All that is intended to encourage us, I think, not just to take the fundamentals as a settled matter, but to see whether we cannot see more in them. So that it says, he "sees the linen cloths lying," that is, he is confirmed in what John had seen, but he also sees the handkerchief which was upon His

head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a distinct place by itself. So that the handkerchief which was about His head is what now arrests his attention, and that is calling his attention to the glory of the Person. The head is the glory of the Person, who it is that lay in death. If the Son of God entered into death He must rise out of it, it was not possible that He should be holden of it. So we are to be impressed with the greatness of who went into death, because God's intention was to establish His thoughts beyond death.

RAE Has not this patient unfolding of the truth that you have referred to, marked the recovery of it during the last number of years, beginning, as it were, while it was still dark, and is that not also a feature of things in our souls; that we are hazy but then we have to go through every feature of it patiently?

AJG That is it, I think. The chapter is most instructive to my mind, from that standpoint. It started at early morn, that is to say, the day is in front of us, but it is while it is yet dark, but things are going to get clearer as we go on, if we go on patiently and in exercise. Particularly if we are like Mary, not like the disciples, content with a certain amount and then go to our own homes.

MSS Would the word as to the Spirit guiding us into all the truth underlie the chapter?

AJG Well, it would, and the way the Lord has brought forward the Spirit and His service to us in these last days, is particularly encouraging and impressive, because it would develop holiness with us and will promote freshness as He is increasingly recognised, and it will give us encouragement that no less than God Himself, in the Person of the Spirit, is here to lead the saints into all His thoughts. So that if we are amenable, capable of being led, we will be led into all that God has in His mind for the saints.

AAT But your point is that some of us catch on to the truth faster than others? I mean John in comparison with Peter?

AJG Yes, and on the other hand Peter went into things more deeply than John, so that there is a certain tempering of things, and John will get the benefit of Peter and Peter will get the benefit of John.

AY Speaking of Mary, would you say that there is a certain amount of spiritual sensitiveness that marks Mary in her waiting, so that as she waits she gets at once a sight of the Lord Himself, and then gets a further unfolding of the truth in having the message to take to the disciples?

AJG Yes, I would. It is not only spiritual sensitiveness but it is the affection which really is proper to the assembly, nothing less than the Person of Christ

will satisfy her. I do not think that that is exactly characteristic of any other family, but it is distinctive of the assembly, that the assembly must have Christ personally, and whatever blessing she enters into she enters into with Him.

WSW The Lord Jesus became the necessity of Mary's heart?

AJG Yes.

AAT You are emphasising affection. Would you distinguish between intelligence and affection?

AJG Both are necessary, but the underlying state is affection. Affection will become intelligent provided there is a following up of things, but sometimes we are inclined to rest and say, Well, I love the Lord, and leave it at that. But then that is not good enough, affection is to be followed up with intelligence.

AAT I was thinking of Mary of Bethany, she is not actually at the tomb and yet I suppose she is quite intelligent, she sat at the feet of Jesus.

AJG I have no doubt she was, but I think Mary Magdalene as having this outstanding affection for Christ - it may have been up to a point, unintelligent at first - is taken up by the Spirit of God as representing the element that is proper to the assembly and to which light is given.

AAT So she says, "Rabboni!"?

AJG Yes.

LAC I notice here that the disciples go to their own homes after the light has been received at first in varied measures. I was wondering whether you had in mind to suggest, that perhaps, after getting the light as we have recently done, for instance, in relation to the matter of the Spirit, we may still come short of what the Lord had in mind in bringing the Spirit so distinctly before us; and although the light may become clear to us, we may turn aside to our homes and what that suggests and lose the full gain of what the Lord might have in mind.

AJG Quite so. And therefore while having the light of things it does not produce any result. There is no result for God as long as these two disciples Simon Peter and John remained in their homes.

HLH But before that it says, He saw and believed.

AJG Yes. It says, "Then entered in therefore the other disciple also who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed; for they had not yet known the scripture, that he must rise from among the dead" (verses 8 and 9). So that he had got a certain distance, he is fully assured now as to the resurrection of

Christ. But then why go to his own home? Why not find out where the Lord was?

RAE Would there be any suggestion in that of a soul coming into the good of justification by faith and stopping there?

AJG It might be, but I would think it was more than that, because the reference to the napkin which was about His head, I believe, is to stress the head, involving the glory of His Person. That is, it is not only the work of Christ, but who it is that has entered into death, and it means that He must rise from the dead. It was not possible that He should be holden of it. Therefore it is like the ark going into Jordan, and making a way through death.

HLH You mean, rightly believing the scriptures that He must rise from among the dead would necessarily involve a state of soul that would be seeking where He was.

AJG Yes, I think that is what Mary Magdalene represents.

CB Would you say that the linen cloths lying and the handkerchief lying in a distinct place by itself, would show the superiority of the Lord in the conditions of death?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think it involves that if such an One as the Son of God entered into death He must of necessity rise again, it was not possible that He should be holden of it, Peter says. And that means that resurrection has come to pass, and come to pass according to God's thoughts.

AAT Romans says that He was raised by the glory of the Father, where does that fit in?

AJG Well, resurrection is presented in two ways. On the one hand it is presented as God's act in raising Christ from among the dead, as you say, by the glory of the Father, which I suppose, is love active in power; but then it is also presented as Christ's own act, that He rose from the dead. He says, Destroy this temple and in three days *I* will raise it up. So that it is a question of the light in which it is presented. God's expression of appreciation of Christ in raising Him from among the dead, and on the other hand the personal inherent power of Christ in rising from the dead. It is two presentations of the same truth.

EMe So you would say that Mary had yet to learn that, because she said, They have taken away my Lord, and then, "If thou hast borne him hence."

AJG Yes, quite so. She evidently had not yet come to it in her soul that He was really risen, though Peter and John had, or John at any rate.

CB In this gospel it says, "Having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit." It is presented as His own act.

AJG He delivered up his spirit, quite so. So He says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again"; taking it again was in view when He laid down His life. It is a question of opening up beyond death the sphere of life, and the order of life, which is in God's purpose for men.

RS When His resurrection is brought forward in scripture on the line of its being His own act, is not that the line on which there is the apprehension of who He is in the truth of His Person?

AJG Yes, I think so.

HEB And the glory that distinguishes Him as such, would you say, in contrast to the Father having raised Him which shows the Father's glory?

AJG Yes, exactly. It was not possible that He should be holden of it, Peter says in Acts 2.

HEB I was wondering if what He said to John in Revelation is in agreement with what you are suggesting here. He spoke of, "The first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages," which doubtless stresses His glory again, His own act.

AJG Yes, quite so. He became dead; it is what He did Himself.

MSS Is there any significance in the fact that the tomb here is presented as in a garden at the end of the previous chapter? Would it suggest that the assembly is in view in all this?

AJG I think that is right. The garden at the end of the previous chapter is the end of the instruction as to the public position. The latter part of the nineteenth chapter of John is the public position, first standing by the cross, and then committed to the fellowship of His death, and then there is a garden. That is, that in the place where Jesus is crucified, which the world is, there is a place that is peculiarly for His pleasure, that is the assembly as a garden, and His Name is cherished there. His body was placed there. We have not His body but we have His Name.

SH Would you say that affection would keep Mary in this waiting attitude in stooping down and looking in at the sepulchre?

AJG Yes, she was as yet unintelligent. I think that is clear. But at the same time there was affection there that was more pronounced than what was seen in Simon Peter and John.

SH So that looking in, it says she saw two angels.

AJG Quite so. But the Lord calls her "woman." That is, He is taking account of the feminine side of things which she represents, affection. It is love for Himself that He delights in in the assembly and He calls her "woman".

LAC Is it not so that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bringing forward of any truth as light in His own time? I was wondering whether the removal of the stone here which has no connection exactly with the disciples or with Mary, might not suggest what has taken place in our own time, in recent years and months, when, so to speak, there has been the removal of a stone in relation to the types of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament particularly; this has opened up the way for things to be seen more clearly; all is under the Spirit's hand?

AJG Well, that is the principle of it. But it is a question of the interpretation of the passage. I should regard the taking away of the stone as that which happened 120 years ago, when the Spirit began to open up the truth in an orderly way, and it has gone on consistently ever since. And it has in mind the full thought of the assembly according to God's mind.

HLH The angels are mentioned here. What part do they have in this gradual unfolding? What do these particular angels represent?

AJG They were there to mark out certain things. She sees two angels in white sitting. You sometimes get angels brought in to represent what God intends the saints to come to, before they are ready for it, like in the second of Luke, there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. The point was that the assembly was to come to that, a great vessel of praise God-ward. But for the moment, until the men were ready for it, the angels would set out the idea. And here there were two angels sitting in white, one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. So that now it is not only the head drawn attention to, but also the feet, that is, movement in correspondence with the head. So that now it is not only the personal glory of Christ that is in view, but it is a question of Christ as Head in relation to a vessel that can move in correspondence to Him.

HOE And so an angel appears to Mary before the incarnation and tells her about it. Does that run right through in scripture as the service of angels as forerunning, as it were?

AJG They are often used up to Pentecost in conveying light, conveying the mind of God, but my impression is, that now that the Spirit is here, angels do not serve so much in that way, they serve in a more providential way.

JM In the ninth verse, the disciples had not the light of resurrection in their souls?

AJG No, but I think that ninth verse is stressing that they could have had, because the scripture was there. It says, "They had not yet known the scripture that he must rise from among the dead." But then, why did they not know the scripture?

MSS It would seem from this that it is possible to have a considerable measure of appreciation of the greatness of Christ, and yet not to have any sense really of the side of response in the assembly to Him?

AJG Quite so. And it is possible to have the light in our souls of Christ and the assembly, the divine thought regarding the assembly, and yet not to touch it in power, for if we are to touch it in power it is a question of affection for Christ, the Lord Himself being apprehended personally. And that is why the Supper has such an important place as the doorway into assembly privilege; because the affections of the saints are freshly quickened by the Supper and that affords opportunity or ground for the Lord to come in and present Himself, as He did to Mary Magdalene.

HLH The expression "My Lord!" on the part of Mary is an indication of the affection for Him that was there? It seems at that point that the Lord, as it were, draws near.

AJG Quite so.

RS Would you say something of the question He asked her, why she wept?

AJG Well, the angel first says, Woman, why dost thou weep? And then the Lord says, Woman, why dost thou weep. Whom seekest thou? Clearly, in the light of the resurrection of Christ, it is not a time for weeping, but the Lord knew what was in Mary's heart so that He adds, Whom seekest thou?

AT Would we learn something from John's name not being mentioned here?

AJG I do not think he mentions his name once all through the gospel. In the twenty-first chapter he mentions the sons of Zebedee, but otherwise, I think, when he speaks of himself it is always the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

JHH Is it not remarkable that with every fresh unfolding of the truth, what has previously come to light is mentioned. We get first of all the linen cloths and then the handkerchief lying, not with the linen cloths, and so on, calling attention to His head, and then we get His head and His feet, as though to suggest that we should be maintained in balance. Are we not in danger, when any fresh light is presented to us, of being occupied with it to a very large

extent whereas the Lord would have us to hold things in balance. We would not, for instance, overlook righteousness to be engaged with the Person of Christ, nor would we overlook His Person to be engaged with His feet, in that way.

AJG I think that is right, that the truth is cumulative in that way and has to be carried forward in our souls. Of course, when any fresh feature of the truth is being brought forward by the Spirit it is quite understandable if for the moment He stresses that and almost fixes our attention on that, to the exclusion of other features for the moment, until the brethren have really taken it up. But once that has come about then it has got to be fitted in to the whole circle of truth.

HOE You were speaking of the Lord saying, Whom seekest thou? Is it not so that He likes us to declare ourselves, give expression to what is in our hearts? Not merely to say, The Lord knows my heart, He likes us to express it.

AJG I am sure of that. We get many instances of that, I think, in scripture. Like when He says to the disciples, But who say ye that I am? The Lord knew what was in their hearts but He wanted to bring it out.

AAT I think you said that affection opened up the way for the Lord to move, and you connected it with the Supper. In giving thanks for the emblems our hearts and affections are moved towards the Lord, so that it would open up a way for Him to move?

AJG That, I understand, is the whole point,

that the Lord has given us the Supper, as He says, In remembrance of *Me*. So that the Supper, the breaking of the bread particularly and then the cup, are intended to recall the Lord to our hearts. And it is as the affections of the saints are quickened by that presentation that there are conditions there that He will answer by coming in. So that the conditions really are seen in Mary; she says, They have taken away *my* Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. Well, that was an evidence of the love that was there in her heart. And then the Lord says, Woman, why dost thou weep, whom seekest thou? And she says, If thou hast borne Him hence tell me where thou hast laid Him and *I* will take Him away. That is all very unintelligent, you might say, but it was an evidence of unmistakable affection.

CB And the Lord says, Why dost thou weep? The affection seen in Mary was not so much in line with the apprehension of the truth?

AJG Quite so, but in a sense, I think we have to carry the disciples and Mary forward together. Mary is the important feature, but then as a background to

Mary there would be intelligence in a measure in Peter and John.

AAT Is it not strange that there is nothing said about the Supper in the chapter and yet the conditions are there?

AJG Quite so.

SC The Lord is not responsible for their unintelligence, the disciples are to be blamed for it.

AJG Yes, the Lord had often spoken to the disciples about His rising again, and Mary of Bethany, I think, had apprehended it. She had seen the power of resurrection in her brother Lazarus being raised. So that I have no doubt that Mary of Bethany was in peace in her own soul, confident that the Lord would rise again, but the disciples in general were not, and as you say, it was really their own fault that they were not. But then how defective *we* are very often in the light of the scriptures and of what has been ministered.

WH It is not a matter of light here, but of state, because He had often said that on the third day He would rise from the dead.

AJG Quite so.

WT Great care was taken of the napkin that was about His head. It says, it was wrapped and put in a place by itself. I suppose that would show that everything was done in order; there was no hurry?

AJG Yes, I suppose the fact that it was folded and put in a distinct place by itself might show completeness of victory, that there was no disorder and no suggestion of any struggle or anything of that sort, but particularly calling attention to the head, the glory of the Person.

HLH Mary refers to the Lord as "*My* Lord," and then she addresses Him as, "Rabboni," Teacher! Would those two ways of addressing Him show the state that would be ready to receive fresh disclosures, My Lord! and My Teacher!

AJG You mean, My Lord! involves subjection, but also affection, and then Teacher would recognise the need of teaching, and that He was the One who could give it?

HLH Yes, the Lord had said, "If I, therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet." There was an obligation then upon those who recognised Him in that way, was it not?

AJG Quite so, and the word Rabboni in itself involves affection, because it is more than Rabbi, it is "Rabboni" - it is the same meaning as Rabbi in the sense that it means "Teacher" but it really means "My own Teacher." There is a touch of affection about it.

HLH It means that she looks to no other for teaching?

AJG Yes.

AAT As regards the portion where Christ is in the midst and where He is made known, I wondered if you wanted to arrive at this this afternoon so that we could get help?

AJG Quite so. That is what we are hoping to arrive at. It is a question of the way the truth of the full heavenly privilege of the assembly is arrived at, and not only the truth but the experience of it. Thank God we know something of it, but it is well to go over this chapter because it indicates the orderly way in which the truth has been recovered and I think it indicates things that should be established in our own souls.

RS And would you say something about "Touch me not!"

AJG That is an important matter, because, I think, Mary, in saying Rabboni! My own Teacher! shows that now that she realised that it was really the Lord before her she wanted to have Him back again in the way that she had known Him in the days of His flesh, in what *He* was to her: but the Lord as much as says, No, it is now a question of your learning to take your place in what the assembly is to *Me*, rather than what I am to you personally. Not that we ever think what the Lord is to us personally but there are greater things.

EMs Why does He say, My Father and your Father, My God and your God? I mean, why does He say "Father" first?

AJG Because, I think, that is the order in which we learn things. That is, we are brought to the knowledge of Christ's Father as our Father with Him. We are brought into a relationship of affection learned in Christ, but then as established in that what we learn is that the One who is thus known as Father - Christ's Father and our Father - is God, Christ's God and our God. He is our God but He is Christ's God. That is to say, He has in Christ before Him Man of the order which is according to His desire in regard of man.

RS Do we not learn Christ in the same way? Learn Him first as "My Saviour" and then later on we learn that He is God. Is it not the same principle?

AJG You mean we learn Him as our Saviour and then we learn that the One who is our Saviour is no less than God Himself?

RS Yes.

AJG Yes, quite so. But I think the way we enter into assembly privilege is by apprehending what is involved in the Father's Name first, and then we

apprehend that the One thus known is no less than God, and that He is Christ's God too.

EMe Is that why the question was asked; Show us the Father? That the Lord was stressing that even at that early moment?

AJG Yes, quite so. I think the name of "Father" is the way that God in grace has adapted Himself to the creature, so that God might come out in revelation according to what He is in His nature, in a way that would attract and hold the affections of the creature.

HLH The message to the brethren was that, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God," but the word to Mary was, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." God is not mentioned in His word to Mary.

AJG "I have not yet ascended to my Father." The Lord constantly referred to God as His Father, and so in stating that to Mary I think that is all He would say. But then in the opening up of the truth, in the whole scope of it, which the message to the brethren is intended to convey, He would bring in the fulness of it.

HLH Yes, I was wondering whether the injunction not to touch Him, was because of the vast range of things connected with the Father.

AJG Quite so.

CB What difference would there be between that presentation in John and what Paul says, Blessed be the *God* and Father? The same relationship but he puts God first.

AJG Yes, well, that seems to be normal, as far as I can see. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," but then on the line of our entering into our privilege we learn the gain of the Father's Name first.

LBr Because "Father" is the revelation.

AJG Quite so, and it establishes us in grace and in the sense of the relationship of love, and then in that the light is unfolded to us, that the One who has thus come out is God, and not only so, but He is Christ's God. That is to say, God with an order of Man before Him of which Christ is the beginning and the Pattern.

JHH We know something through grace of what it is to be brought to the Father and to enjoy His love and so on, the relationships with Him, are you suggesting that there is a point beyond that in the service of God where we actually reach God?

AJG Well, yes, quite so. It is not a different Person but it is the sense in the soul that the One thus known is God, and that we are His creatures, that He loves to have man before Him, but it is Man in the order of manhood which is set out in Christ. So that it is a wonderfully exalted thought. It is not just God coming out in grace to poor sinners, but it is God bringing in an order of manhood in Christ great enough to afford pleasure to Him.

HLH So He calls the disciples "My brethren."

AJG Yes, exactly.

RS And there is the declaration of the Father's Name. The Lord said, I have declared unto them thy Name and will declare it.

AJG Quite so. And so it says in Hebrews, "I will declare thy Name to my brethren, in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises." That is, the Lord has brethren, those who are worthy of Him, of whom He is not ashamed, and to such a company He will declare the Father's Name. But then He has the assembly, the same persons, but a dignified company which can move as one under His influence; and He has that available for response to God.

RAE Is that why we have the references to the woman earlier in the chapter before we have this message about the Father? I wondered if it was necessary to have the assembly first as that vessel which is under the influence of Christ, in order that there may be this service of God?

AJG Exactly. It is really the answer to the second of Genesis, the woman made for the man. So the Lord says, Woman! And there it is in Mary Magdalene, not simply in her personally, but what she represents is the basic idea of the assembly. That is, something which has incorruptible affection for Christ and is not satisfied with anything short of Christ personally.

HAL Is that why He showed them His hands and His side? She was taken out of the man.

AJG Yes, quite so. I think the hands would refer perhaps to the way He has served us in love, and then the side would be an allusion, doubtless, to the second of Genesis. He lay in death in order that there might be this wonderful woman, the assembly, brought to light as a result of His death.

AT Referring to Mary touching Him, the Lord was teaching her what she should be to Him. Not only what He was to her but what she should be to Him?

AJG What she should be to Him as merging with the brethren. It is not a question now of what each of us is individually to the Lord, although there is

that side of things, but it is a question now of merging with the brethren - "Go to my brethren," He says, "and say unto them." She was to merge with the brethren, and to understand what the brethren and the assembly are to the heart of Christ.

MSS This is not the knowledge of the Father individually, you would say, but the full light of assembly privilege?

AJG Yes.

LAC Should we cover the thought of the bride and of the brethren after the Supper?

AJG Well, in our souls. It may or may not come out in actual expression, I mean, the terms may or may not be used. It is not a question of feeling bound to use the terms, as long as the thing is there substantially in the souls of the brethren. As has often been pointed out, John in his gospel and first two epistles does not mention the assembly at all, and yet certainly in his gospel he has the assembly in mind, he has the thing there vitally, but he does not mention the term. So that it is not essential that the actual terms should necessarily be used every time, as long as the thing is there in the souls of the brethren.

HLH The day begins with early morning while it was still dark, and then an evening is mentioned after all this?

AJG I suppose it means the end of the day. That is, it is a question of a day, one day, a complete period, in which the whole truth is arrived at. After it had been lost, when there was a period of darkness, the whole truth is arrived at.

EMs Is it not reversed in Genesis, there you get the evening and the morning?

AJG Well, the chapter begins with the morning while it was yet dark. That is to say, the day is beginning to open but there is still great darkness, but then as the chapter proceeds the light increases until you get the evening which is simply that you have now come to the end of the day, to the fulness of things, it is not the thought there of the light diminishing.

HLH Things will go on to the end, there is a guarantee for that?

AJG Quite so.

VB It says here, "Where the disciples were." Would that suggest the state of soul that they were in at the time?

AJG I think it has been well said that it is the disciples that are the attraction to Christ, the place, or the room, is not the attraction. A cathedral is no

attraction to Christ however grand it might be; it is a question of where the disciples are, that is where the Lord will come, if we are truly disciples.

SW Would you tell us why in Genesis you get evening first?

AJG Evening and the morning? I think that is because of the fact that sin had come into God's universe, therefore what is presented in scripture is the way that God is going to bring His thoughts out notwithstanding the background of the evil. So it starts with evening and goes on to morning.

AY I was wondering if we see here in verse 19 the character of the day that has come in. "When therefore it was evening on *that* day, which was the first day of the week." It would give the character to the incoming of something new in the resurrection of Christ.

AJG Yes, I think so. So that we get eternity spoken of as "the *day* of God," and also we read, "There shall be no night there," so the final thought is day.

HLH And what transpires after this would all suggest the joy connected with the day?

AJG Quite so. And it is the end of the day, not in the sense that the light is diminishing but simply that you have come now to the fulness of the day.

RAE Would you say that down to verse 18 is largely a question of the light of the position, but now from verse 19 onward the thing is to be worked out and the great central feature is the Lord Jesus in the midst?

AJG That is it. All the light is given us, but then in order that the thing might be realised, it is essential that the Lord Himself should come in. And we get nowhere if we do not have the Supper. It is a question of affections being quickened afresh, and of our not being satisfied with anything short of the Lord Himself.

JS You mean that there is a point reached so that the Lord can come in then in the midst?

AJG Yes, the disciples were there.

AY Is there anything for us to learn in His showing them His hands and His side? Causing them to rejoice?

AJG I think the hands would refer to the way love has served, and after all we need that every time, I think. In some way or other we need that, because we are still here in a responsible position and in mixed conditions too, conscious of the flesh in us, and that kind of thing; therefore we need to be freshly reminded of the way love has served. That is, He has been into death for us, in order that all that attached to us might be forever set aside, and the Spirit

makes that good. The Lord would remind us of the way His love has served. It is just a question of the way love has served us, so that Christ Himself should be before us, and then we are free to take account of the side of divine purpose, and of the way He entered into death in order that the assembly might be brought to light as of Himself.

LBr That would enable us to abstract ourselves then from conditions that we are in?

AJG Exactly. We are entitled to do that, and have power to do it in the Spirit.

HLH The disciples rejoiced having seen the Lord. Is that the answer to the longing that was with Mary, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him"?

AJG Yes, quite so. It is remarkable that the passage, you might almost say, breaks off there, that is to say, it does not go any further, it does not give us a pattern of the service of God, it just leads us up to the point from which all can proceed. If the Lord is there and love for Him in the assembly, then the service of God can proceed, but there is no pattern given us of it.

HEB You get that in principle in connection with Jesse sending for David? Samuel said, We will not sit at table till he come hither, and then the Spirit of God dilates on his qualities?

AJG Yes, quite so, and then we get suggestions of it in, for instance, what the Queen of Sheba saw, "the house that he had built," that would be the assembly for Christ, "and the food of his table, and the deportment of his servants, and the order of service of his attendants, and their apparel, and his cupbearers," and finally "his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah." So that there was the thought of a movement upward, but there is no need of a pattern in the scripture by which to fill out the service of God; that is left to the Spirit and Christ's own personal impulse.

RS Therefore we would not have any ready-made service, it is simply a question of giving Christ His place?

AJG Quite so.

JHH So that as you mentioned just now, we need not have the terms so long as the actual thing is there. Is it not better to have the thing substantially and not have the terms, than to have the terms without the substance in power?

AJG Oh, well, that is so. There is nothing wrong about the terms, but I think John's ministry illustrates that. That while his gospel is written with the assembly in view he never once mentions the assembly in terms.

CB Is it the mind of the Lord that we should enter into the truth of the assembly as given us in John without the terms that are being used around us?

AJG There is nothing wrong about using the terms, the great thing is that the truth is there substantially.

CB So we come together for the Supper with a measure of expectation too?

AJG Yes, indeed. And the Lord intends that it should bring about conditions in the saints that He would be only too glad to respond to by coming in.

RAE There is a reference in Psalm 104 to bread which strengthens man's heart and wine which makes it glad. Do you think that there would be a suggestion in that of the Supper, and the effect that it has to strengthen us in the love of Christ and stimulate our affections?

AJG I think that would be right. One great thought connected with the cup is that we are stimulated by it in a spiritual sense.

RAE That really opens the door to all this that we are having?

AJG Yes, quite so.

LAC What would you say as to the expression that we find in verse 28, "Thomas answered and said to Him, my Lord and my God." Is there anything that would correspond to that, the worship of Christ as God, that would come into the service?

AJG If the Spirit leads that way, it is in order.

LAC Is there not sometimes a point reached in which the Lord Jesus is worshipped, as He comes before us?

AJG Quite so, indeed. And the underlying reason why He is worshipped, is that He *is* God.

CB He breathed into them and they received the Holy Spirit. Would that be the state in keeping with the position?

AJG I think now the Spirit of God is turning to the thought of being here representatively for Him in administration. Because it is remarkable that it says, "The disciples rejoiced therefore having seen the Lord. Jesus said therefore again to them, Peace be to you, as the Father sent me forth I also send you." It leads on to the thought of being sent forth. Not being conducted into the presence of the Father, that is dealt with, but now having enjoyed privilege we are to be sent forth, and immediately there is the thought brought in of administration, remitting sins or retaining them and so on. All is

now to be handled in the spirit of Christ, in heavenly grace and trustworthiness.

CB And that is why we get remission first?

AJG Yes, exactly, but it is a very striking thing that the Lord says, "Whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted to them, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained." That means that the Lord contemplates that the assembly or the brethren composing the assembly, are to be trustworthy.

HOE Is it not noticeable that on that same day He recovers the two going to Emmaus, and also appeared to Peter?

AJG Quite so, you mean that He moved Himself in that spirit of grace? Exactly, and so He breathed into them. It is not so much the thought of the Spirit coming upon them as at Pentecost, although this, I have no doubt, was just pattern and looked on to Pentecost: It is not the thought of the Spirit as power outwardly, but of the Spirit as giving inward character to the way things are done, He breathed into them, so that things would be done in His own Spirit.

DLE Is the view of the assembly here as a whole as representing the Lord?

AJG I think so, as He would now commit administration to the assembly and it is to be carried out in His Spirit, and that involves the Spirit of grace on the one hand, and the spirit of faithfulness to God on the other, because the Lord was essentially faithful to God in all things.

RAE Is it so, as we take account of things practically, that only those who have some measure of entrance into privilege in the service of God, are capable of taking up assembly administration?

AJG I think so. It is clear that in our administration there is to be an impression left of what is heavenly, but if we are to be heavenly we must first enter into heaven. Just as the assembly is taken into heaven by Christ with Him, and then it comes forth from heaven as the heavenly city to administer for God.

HAL The thought of administration here is collective, is it not? And in the reference to the Holy Spirit it is "Receive the Holy Spirit"? His Spirit, as you have been saying?

AJG Yes, "Receive the Holy Spirit," but *He* breathed into them, so that it is His own Spirit, and at the same time it is "Holy Spirit," stressing holiness.

SW Does Thomas being absent infer that it is necessary for the element of unbelief to be absent?

AJG That is true, at the same time, of course, he represents someone who may be a little bit careless about getting to the meetings and he missed something. We have seen the Lord, they say, and Thomas would never be able to make good that loss. Thomas would never have, at first hand, that particular impression they got of the Lord. He might get some sense of it by the Spirit, but he missed it.

LBr So that next Lord's Day we might not get the touch that we got today?

AJG Exactly, and if I am absent next Lord's Day when I need not be, I shall miss something.

RS Would the very form of his expression imply that he had missed what had taken place on the previous Lord's Day? Because that was not the form of expression referred to, it was "My Father and your Father, my God and your God."

AJG Well, quite so. Of course, we know that dispensationally he represents Israel, so that there is the difference on that account.

SPIRITUALITY

Genesis 24:10-14; Genesis 24:28-30; Genesis 24:61-67; Ephesians 2:18

AJG What was in one's mind was that we need spirituality, that is, a spiritual condition in ourselves, and also the support and help of the Holy Spirit, right through in the service of the assembly, both in that part of it that relates to the Lord, that has Christ in view, and that part that relates to the Father. We know that the twenty-fourth of Genesis is a remarkably full chapter, and capable of being taken up in many different lights, but we have been helped to see that one light in which the latter part of the chapter may be viewed is the way that the assembly is brought to Christ following on, or as the result of, the Supper. But underlying that is a necessary state of spirituality among ourselves. What is to be noticed in Genesis 24 is that when Isaac lifted up his eyes, what he sees is the camels. It does not say that he saw Rebecca, but what attracts his attention is the camels, camels in movement. That is evidently a suggestion of the saints moving together as one in the power of the Spirit. That is what attracted Isaac's attention, and that is what is so attractive, we may say, to the heart of Christ. And then when we come to Ephesians, the verse that is so well known, we have not only the service of Christ but also the service of the Spirit. "Through him," it says, that is Christ, "we have both access by one Spirit to the Father." So that throughout the service, the service of the Spirit as unifying the saints and carrying them, empowering them in movement, is in view. But before that and underlying it is a state of spirituality among the saints which is typified in Rebecca in relation to the well, and to her own pitcher, all of which are important features in the chapter. So that we find that the servant made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water, and he stipulates that when the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water, "let it come to pass that the maiden to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and who will say drink and I will give thy camels drink also, be she whom thou hast appointed," So that the first thing of great importance is the well and how Rebecca stands in relation to the well. And then in verse 30 when Laban comes out it says that "he came to the man, and behold he was standing by the camels by the well," so that the well and the camels are evidently of great importance in the sight of the servant, so that he would impress them upon anyone who comes out. He was standing there by the camels by the well.

SP What is the significance of the well at the present moment?

AJG The well is, of course, a type of the Holy Spirit, but then the idea in a well is, of course, different from the idea in camels, and different from the

idea in the servant, although all are different types of the Spirit. But we can easily see that the well is the fundamental thought, because it would be a necessary daily matter for those in the East to come to the well, they would have no means of refreshment, no water to drink, if they did not come to the well. They would have no means of cleansing if they did not come to the well. The well would be a daily matter for them, and a daily necessity. And so it really represents the feature of the Spirit as testing us as to how far we are spiritual, how far we really avail ourselves of the Spirit as a habitual, daily matter.

HLH Does the spontaneous offer on the part of Rebecca to give the camels drink also suggest the underlying spiritual conditions that you refer to?

AJG I think it would. She was ready and able to afford refreshment to the Holy Spirit, typified in the servant. And, of course, the Spirit is with us all the time and therefore we are either pleasing Him or grieving Him. We are doing one or the other, we are either affording Him refreshment or we are affording Him displeasure.

JS So that the well is very important?

AJG The well is *very* important; it is basic; it underlies all the rest.

JS "Shall be in him a well of water springing up."

AJG That is it. Quite so.

AAT Is there more than one well in this chapter?

AJG At the end we get the well Beer-lahai-roi. Of course, there are many wells in Genesis especially, showing that the Spirit of God is constantly being brought before us. But I think this well outside the city, "He made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water, at the time of the evening, when the women came out to draw water," is to stress the idea of what is needed every day, habitually.

SW Would "many wells" suggest the availability of the Spirit?

AJG I am sure it would, especially in chapter 26, which follows on this, where Isaac is seen constantly digging wells.

LAC You mentioned Rebecca's pitcher, did you have in mind to say something about that?

AJG Well, it says in verse 15, that when Rebecca came out she had her pitcher upon her shoulder, and then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Let me, I pray thee, sip a little water out of *thy* pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord! And she hasted and let down *her* pitcher on *her* hand." The pitcher is

really identified with Rebecca, that is, it is suggested that Rebecca is fully a vessel of the Spirit. The pitcher is really part of her; she had carried it on her shoulder and she had let it down on her hand.

LAC She filled it at the well in verse 16.

AJG Yes.

MSS In the fourth of John the woman left her water-pot and went her way into the city, is that a similar thought?

AJG Not exactly. Discarding the water-pot is that she herself is to be the vessel now, because she had come to draw from a well that was *not* a type of the Spirit. The Lord said of that well, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again," so the well she came to was not a type of the Spirit, and so she discards her water-pot in the recognition that she herself is now to be a vessel of the Spirit.

AT Would the number of camels here, ten, suggest the availability of the Spirit for service?

AJG I have no doubt it refers to the sufficiency there is in the Spirit for whatever is required. The servant knew what was required, and all the resources of his master were under his hand, and he took what was required.

JS How would this come in, "Spring up, O well, Sing ye unto it"?

AJG That is a very important matter; as understanding that the Spirit is here with us all the time, it is a happy thing to express our recognition of that, that He is here to bring in freshness. And we particularly need that in handling a chapter like this that has been so much before saints of recent years, that there should be freshness, not novelties, but freshness, so that the truth might have present application to us.

SC He *made* the camels to kneel down; was it by authority or by influence?

AJG Of course, it is natural to camels to kneel down in order to take water. God has caused that kind of creature to act in that way. It is all, I believe, brought in to accentuate the idea of dependence which always goes along with the Spirit.

HOE Perhaps you would say a little more about the pitcher, we all need water; we need refreshment; we need cleansing, and we need a pitcher to draw it.

AJG I think it simply means that there needs to be a vessel. It is one thing for us to talk about the Spirit, and all that He is able to be to us, but as we get it in 2 Kings 4, the great need is vessels, empty vessels, and the pitcher is that. Rebecca's own pitcher is what she was herself as a vessel.

LBr Is it more a question of our state?

AJG That is what it amounts to. It is the state with us, as to whether we are looking to the Spirit, and affording Him the scope that He desires, or whether we are careless about the presence of the Spirit, and grieving Him.

HOE A dependent and receptive mind and heart?

AJG Yes, exactly.

DLE Would you say a little as to refreshing the Spirit?

AJG The Spirit is God, and He is dwelling in us all the time, therefore, the more we do what is pleasing to God, the more He will be refreshed, and the more we do what is displeasing to God the more He will be grieved. It is a very simple thing, it seems to me, refreshing the Spirit; He is here in us. By the activities of love, hospitality and anything that we do that is pleasing to God; we refresh the Spirit who is dwelling in us. Anything we do that is displeasing to Him would grieve Him.

HLH To do that we have to be constantly replenished. After she had given the servant enough to drink, then she says, "I will draw water for thy camels also," which suggests a fresh phase of exercise, does it not?

AJG It does, I think, and a readiness and availability on her part, and activity too. As Mr. Taylor said years ago, Christianity is not an armchair matter; it is not a question of sitting at home in comfort and reading books; it is a question of activity, although there has to be quietness as well, in order to receive the truth and assimilate it. But the truth is to work out in practice. So it says of Jesus that He went about doing good.

FHP Would you say that Rebecca is a sample of that? An example for us, she is marked by spiritual alertness and also spiritual energy?

AJG Yes, I think so; great energy.

HLH And the more we are marked by refreshing the Spirit the more we shall find that we are being replenished?

AJG I am sure of that, and therefore there is the need of the balancing of the two things, the subjection and quietness and restfulness that are necessary for replenishment, and then the activity in which the movements of love and all that is pleasing to God find expression.

AAT She let down her pitcher. How would you apply that today?

AJG It just shows that she was agile and ready. First she comes out with the pitcher on her shoulder, showing that she is marked by power in her

movements, and then she could let down her pitcher on her hand quite readily. It just shows readiness and agility on her part, I think, but the pitcher is really herself. Rebecca and her pitcher are identified.

WT Would you connect this with the scripture in the gospel when it says, "And a man shall meet you carrying a pitcher of water, follow him"?

AJG Very much the same idea. Really that was characteristic of the man, that he had spiritual refreshment, a living ministry, with him.

AAT I think you made some distinction between the Spirit and the power of the Spirit?

AJG Well, the camels evidently represent the Spirit viewed as power for movement and that is very necessary when we are together, that the saints should move together as one. And hence the great need of being unified in the Spirit, and moving together as one having one thought, and I believe that is what the camels represent. So that when Isaac lifted up his eyes it was camels he saw coming; that feature attracted him.

LAC In connection with what you were saying as to affording pleasure to the Holy Spirit, does scripture support the thought of having the Holy Spirit as an Object, or does the Spirit's pleasure rest in our having Christ as an Object and His being pleased with that?

AJG I think the main service of the Spirit is to glorify Christ and to glorify the Father too, but then He is one of the Godhead, and is serving in a wonderful way, and we are baptised to the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: which is an objective presentation of the Spirit; so evidently there is room for Him to be apprehended objectively.

LAC Would you help us a little more on that line? I think we need considerable help just there.

AJG I think we shall get help on that as we develop spirituality. I think what we need is spirituality to start with, and to come to a more definite recognition of the part the Spirit takes in the assembly, both in relation to the Lord and in relation to the Father.

CB What the Lord said in John 4, "Give me to drink," that was a test to spirituality that was not there yet, but eventually the woman became a vessel.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AAT Would you say that the spirituality, as you are mentioning at the moment, depends upon state?

AJG The term spirituality, as I understand it, simply means a spiritual state.

HN Would you say that was lacking at Corinth?

AJG It evidently was, in so far as the assembly as a whole was concerned; I have no doubt there were individual brothers and sisters there who were spiritual.

HN Would what the apostle wrote too with regard to keeping the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, come in here?

AJG That is a necessary basis. There could be no spirituality apart from that. That really is a question more of what is moral than of what is spiritual. When we speak of what is moral we are speaking of questions of right and wrong and good and evil, and what is moral must underlie what is spiritual.

BLW Is there anything in the fact that the well was outside the city?

AJG I suppose in a general way, it suggests that there is nothing in common between the Spirit and the world, if we regard the city as a type of the world. Whether or not it is necessarily that, it would be true that there is nothing in common between the Spirit and the world; we know that from chapter 14 of John's gospel. But it says, He made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water, at the time of the evening when the women came out to draw water. I think it is suggestive of a certain movement out in order to get the gain of the Spirit. If we spend all our time in natural things, or worse still, in fleshly things, we shall not know much of replenishment by the Holy Spirit. So the women had to come out to draw water.

HOE Are spiritual thoughts and impressions, then, got and enjoyed more outside the daily life of responsibility?

AJG Well, of course, the Spirit can help us in our daily responsibilities, He is with us all the time. It is in the power of the Spirit that the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us. He is there to help us all the time, but as you say, I think we need to be in liberty from those things in order really to get the gain of what the Spirit would open up to us of heavenly things.

AY What would we learn from verse 12, the servant here says, "Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, meet me, I pray thee, with thy blessing this day, and deal kindly with my master Abraham"?

AJG Well, he is concerned for his master. It is good to see that the Spirit in all His activities is concerned with the Father and the Son. He is sent forth by the father at the beginning of the chapter, so that his master is the father, and at the end of the chapter he says that the son is his master, so that it is the Spirit typically serving in relation to the Father and the Son. If we are desirous of

becoming spiritual we shall soon detect the things that are a hindrance to us and those have to be left, as was said.

AAT She says to the servant, "Drink, my lord." There is a certain conversation going on, is there not, between Rebecca and the servant? Has it any application today?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think we need to cultivate communion with the Holy Spirit, because He has come so near to us and is with us all the time, that He is ready to help us. And He is there on behalf of the Father and of the Son.

HOE Why does she say, "Drink, my lord," and when the servant is repeating it in verse 46, he does not say, My lord, he says, "Drink"?

AJG It is suggestive, I suppose, of the lowliness of the Spirit in His service, the servant does not say, Drink, my lord. And on the other hand, the fact that Rebecca does say, Drink, my lord; shows with what respect she had treated him.

LAC Should we seek liberty now to address the Spirit as Lord?

AJG That would be legitimate, as far as I understand,

because "Lord" is a title that is applied to God. The title "Lord" can rightly be attributed to any of the Persons of the Godhead, as far as I understand, so long as we distinguish the lordship of Christ. Jesus is the only One who is *made* Lord. So that if we want to address the Lord Jesus, we should either say, Lord Jesus; or if we are speaking in public it should be perfectly clear who it is we are speaking to. He is *made* Lord, but on the other hand, the Father is called Lord, the Lord Himself calls the Father Lord, "Lord of heaven and earth", and He is called Lord in James' epistle, "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father" it says. And then we get: "the Lord the Spirit" in the third of 2 Corinthians. So "Lord" is a general title that may be applied rightly to any Person of the Godhead. But then there is only one Man who is Lord and that is Jesus; He has been made Lord.

CB It says here of the servant that all the treasure of his master was under his hand, and it says in John's gospel, the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things to be in His hand.

AJG That is very interesting, that all things are placed by the Father in the hand of the Son according to John 3, and according to this typical scripture, all the wealth of the Father is under the hand of the Spirit. That shows that there is no divergence at all between the Persons of the Godhead. It is all in the hand of Christ administratively and He will be displayed as the One into whose hand everything has been committed, but then at the same time the Spirit is

down here on behalf of Christ, and on the Father's behalf as well: and therefore all that may be needed at any time for the service that He has in hand is there at His disposal.

MSS Is that scripture, "To us... there is one Lord, Jesus Christ", explained by what you said about the Lord Jesus being *made* Lord?

AJG Yes, I think so. "To us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things and we for him" - that shows that the Father is regarded as in the place of supremacy. To us there is one God, the Father. And then, one Lord, Jesus Christ, that is the place of administration, and Jesus has been made Lord. But in a general way the title Lord may be applied to any one of the Godhead. It is because Jesus is God that we worship Him.

MSS There is this feature of haste in verse 20. It says, "She hasted and emptied her pitcher", and then it says she "ran again." Is there some significance in that?

AJG I think it is very important in connection with assembly service, that while we do not want to be restless, we want to be *restful* and subject, yet that there should not be dilatoriness or anything suggesting indolence. There should be alertness and readiness in the Spirit.

WSW She is marked by agility?

AJG That seems to characterise her, that she is marked by agility, which evidently is a feature of spiritual state. Often we find ourselves tested in something required to be done. It may be we find we have to go through a certain process of self-examination and cleansing before we are equal to it, because we have been careless, but not so with Rebecca, she was equal to the moment.

AAT She not only gave the servant water to drink but she gave to the camels also; a lot of work was involved?

AJG Yes, exactly. I do not know how much a camel can drink but it is a pretty considerable quantity, and there were ten of them. And a young woman drawing it from a well with a pitcher, would mean a good deal of hard labour, and she was equal to it and ready for it.

MC It says here, "And hereby I shall know that thou hast dealt kindly with my master," as an answer to his request as to the maiden.

AJG That is what the Spirit is looking for in the saints. He recognises these features. He is looking for spirituality, conditions in which the Spirit is

habitually and characteristically recognised; because then, we shall be able with more definite power to move into assembly service.

WH Do we not see features of the Spirit in the servant standing, and the camels by the well, and the man being astonished?

AJG Mr. Taylor has drawn attention to that very verse, verse 21, and to a verse that we get in one of the gospels where it says of the Lord when the centurion answered Him, that He wondered (Matthew 8: 10). And here it says the man was astonished, as though, as the work of God in souls comes into evidence, it is so wonderful, so great, that it could be said even of the Lord, that He wondered, and that one who typifies the Spirit is said to be astonished. It is just to convey to us, I think, how thoroughly appreciative divine Persons are as they see the work of God in the saints showing itself.

RS Do you think all that is to teach us on our part to appreciate the work of God in one another?

AJG I believe that is a very important point, that we should learn to appreciate the work of God in one another. It would greatly help to knit us together the more we concentrate on looking on what God has wrought in each other, and appreciate each other accordingly. Of course, we can only appreciate what is there.

CB That is what is meant by appropriation of each other?

AJG Yes, I think so.

AY Would you say that things are opening up and developing more with Rebecca? The servant asks her here if there is room in her father's house and she said to him, "There is straw and also much provender with us, also room to lodge." As it were, she is ready to give more than what is even asked, as a result of the refreshment that is given in verse 21, in drawing the water for the camels.

AJG Yes, I think so. And that is a very great thing, because in the things of God we have to make constant progress and develop and enlarge, there is no such thought as stagnation in the things of God. And we are living in days of recovery and there is to be still further enlargement and development so that we might be led into *all* the truth; and that requires a good deal of readiness on our part for displacement, so that there may be more room for the Spirit.

MC He enquires her pedigree as soon as the camels had drunk enough. What would you say about that?

AJG I suppose it is to find out whether she can give account of herself. He did not ask for his own purpose, because he had already stipulated that the one who presented certain features should be the one, and Rebecca exactly presented them, so that he did not need to enquire for his own sake. But what he wanted to do was to bring out whether she knew her own genealogy. It is a very important matter for us as to whether we can trace our genealogy, whether we recognise ourselves as born of God and of Christ's own order, because if we do, then we shall be more ready to take our place as of the assembly as suitably and worthily of it, instead of being occupied with ourselves as sinners saved by grace. It is a question whether we know how to take account of our genealogy.

LBr So you would say the Spirit likes to hear us speak?

AJG Yes, quite so.

EMe He decks her with these jewels before He enquired?

AJG As a matter of fact, he does not. He brings them out but he does not put them on her until after she had answered. We might not notice that in reading the chapter. You find in verse 22, it says that "the man *took* a gold ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, ten shekels weight of gold, and said, "Whose daughter art thou"? When he gives an account of it, he says in verse 47: "I asked her and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him. And I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her hands." So that while he brought them out before he asked the question he did not put them on her until she had answered the question.

RS I was noticing in the same verse that it says, And it came to pass when the camels had drunk enough, that the man took the gold ring and so on. It was when the *camels* had drunk enough. What would you say about that?

AJG I suppose it stresses that particular service. When she finished that particular service which she had undertaken, which was so gratifying to the Spirit, now He is proposing to adorn her. But at the same time He first asks this question which she answers. She says, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." That stresses the subjective side of things. She is the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor. Why should she say the son of Milcah, that was Nahor's wife, "whom she bore to Nahor", why should she say that? And as a matter of fact, Milcah, Nahor's wife, was related to Abraham just as Nahor himself was related to Abraham. So on both sides, paternally and maternally, she is of the right lineage.

CB We have the relationship before we have the liberty of that relationship?

AJG Yes.

AY Would you say then that the Spirit is now concerned to bring out the truth, and then to adorn the saints in moral suitability to Christ?

AJG Yes, if we understand that we are heavenly, and of God, of Christ's own order, surely we would be concerned to be marked by the features proper to those who are such. And that is a question of features that can be produced by the Spirit.

TBl The adornment is all gold. What is the significance?

AJG Well, at this point it stresses the gold. I suppose gold usually refers to what is of God. But later on we find the servant brought forth silver articles and gold articles and clothing. So that there is more variety there. But this is stressing what is of God. I think it refers possibly to the feature of spiritual discernment, which the adornment of the nose might perhaps suggest - the feature of discrimination. But then the bracelets on her hands would be to draw attention to the pleasing character of her activities, really her work were of God.

MSS The camels are greatly stressed after verse 22, where it says they had drunk enough, for she says in verse 25, "There is straw and also much provender with us" before she says there is room to lodge. In other words, the camels seem to be first in her mind. Would all that suggest that we have to come to it that there is absolutely no power outside of the Spirit to enter into these things?

AJG I am sure that is right, and not only for the understanding of them but then to move in them, and that is what is so important in the assembly, because it is not a question of moving in these things as separate individuals, it is a question of learning to move together as one, and that is what is so important.

Isaac "lifted up his eyes and behold; camels were coming" - it is this movement that attracts his attention.

LAC I was wondering if her reply in that way was very intelligent, showing that she recognised that the servant and the camels could not be separated. That if he is to lodge he must have provision and room for the camels as well. Would that indicate intelligence on the part of a believer who recognises that progress cannot be made unless the Spirit is depended on for power?

AJG Yes, I think it would. He is to be relied upon for direction, to guide us into the truth, and also the power to move in relation to the guiding. I think really that is one of our greatest needs, we are not without light, we are not without the guidance of the Spirit, and we have a certain appreciation of it in our minds, and I am not speaking in any way disparagingly, but I think our greatest need is the power to answer to it, and to answer to it together in assembly.

AAT Why is the word "wife" used in the last verse?

AJG She became his wife, that is the thought of union. The idea of a wife is that she has been united to her husband and henceforth she is one with him, so she is thoroughly with him in all his interests. And that is what is so important in the assembly, that we are brought, by the Spirit, to the point of conscious union with Christ, and then it is a simple matter to have part in the service of God, because paramount before the heart of Christ is that His Father should be served, and He wants the assembly with Him in it.

RS Would you say then that the silver and gold articles and the clothing suggest the thought of suitability to Him, in order to be presented to Him in union?

AJG Yes, I would think so, and I think it conveys the thought of wealth in a general sense as well, because it says, Silver *articles* and gold *articles*. It does not say exactly whether they were for adornment or not. It is the general thought of wealth, I think, and then there is clothing.

LAC Were not the features there which the Spirit could clothe in that sense. She is said to have been of a beautiful countenance and a virgin, what is inward and outward corresponding in a sense, and then the Spirit coming in to seal it all as approving it?

AJG Yes, quite so. I believe we need to concentrate on this thought of spirituality, and then movement together in the Spirit in answer to the guidance of the Spirit, because, as I say, we are not lacking in light, but what we are lacking in is the power to answer to the light, and to answer to it together.

MC Is there not a point of unification seen in the Spirit and Rebecca at this point?

AJG I believe the camels rather represent that, because although it is "camels" in the plural, meaning that there is abundance of power, they are regarded as an entity, so that Isaac lifts up his eyes and sees the camels. And

I believe that just represents the power there is in the Spirit to unify the saints that we may move together as one in the power of the Spirit.

SW What is to be noticed in Isaac bringing Rebecca to his mother's tent?

AJG It is evidently just a provisional setting. That is, it is not the thought of our being taken to be with Christ in glory, it is a question of what the Lord has down here in the assembly just provisionally; a tent is a provisional idea.

SC Because of the answer that is given by the maiden in verse 47, would you say that pre-eminence is given to divine Persons by the servant in verse 48?

AJG You are referring to the answer that Rebecca gave in verse 47, and then the effect on the servant, "I stooped, and bowed down before Jehovah," and so on? Quite so. That would show that the worship of God, as Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," is in view all through, and the servant is doing it.

SH Would you say that we see the end that is before the Spirit in Isaac?

AJG Well, according to this chapter. This chapter does not carry us farther than the assembly typically being brought to Christ. So that it is dealing really with what we speak of as the first part of the meeting. But then, what that has in mind is that union with Christ, as consciously enjoyed, should provide that which the Lord can use in the service of God.

HLH There is a diffidence on the part of some who otherwise have liberty to address the Spirit, as to what part He has up to that point in the morning meeting, feeling that it is, of course, the Lord's Supper, and *He* has a very pronounced place. But is there liberty to address the Spirit up to that point in the meeting?

AJG I think that is just where we need spirituality. That is what we have all got to develop in. I believe these questions will find an answer just as we develop in the needed spirituality. It is a question of the liberty that the Spirit will Himself afford, where there are the conditions for it.

LAC In connection with what you mention about spirituality, do you mean what we arrive at intuitively as we move on with the Lord and with the Spirit, or have you in mind that we come more and more under the influence of light as is brought out in the revelation of God?

AJG Yes. I do not know that it is a matter of what is intuitive, because that excludes the thought of teaching, but it is a question of being more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movements. And I think this matter of addressing the

Spirit, and the part He is to have in the actual service, is a particularly sensitive and spiritual matter. That is all I had in mind.

RS Would you say just there that ministry is given in order that we might develop in spirituality, and we get to know the Spirit and get a touch from Him as to what to do at any given time?

AJG Exactly, so that we move under spiritual impulse and are supported in it. What the Spirit supports is certainly of God, what He does not support is not of God; either it is not of God in itself, or it is not of God at that moment because there is not the spiritual state for it.

RAE It refers in Galatians to walking by the Spirit and living by the Spirit, is that spirituality?

AJG Yes, I think so.

EBa Would you say something about verse 28?

AJG It is all in keeping with what we said previously as to her agility and activity, but what one was specially seeking to concentrate on is first the well and Rebecca in relation to the well, with her pitcher, and then the camels, and then the man. Because in verse 30 it says, When Laban came up to the man he was standing by the camels by the well, as though the man is thoroughly committed to the camels and the well. The three are inseparable. If the service of the man is to be fully known we need the well and Rebecca and her pitcher first, and then the camels.

MSS Is that connected with the spiritual state in verse 61 where it brings in her maids and it says, they rode upon the camels?

AJG Yes, exactly. "And Rebecca arose, and her maids, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man." So that it is the full thought now of the assembly for Christ. The feminine thought accentuated - Rebecca and her maids. It is the idea of the assembly secured in feminine affections for Christ, what ought to result from our taking the Supper. But now it is a question of moving together in the power of the Spirit as towards Christ.

MSS Would it be right to say that the reference to the servant here as a Man might stress the Person of the Spirit?

AJG Well, I think so. It is evidently a more personal presentation than either the well or the camels.

SP Would you say a word now on the verse in Ephesians?

AJG Well, just a minute more on this chapter, because I do not think there is a great deal of difficulty about Ephesians, save that that only confirms and

enlarges what we are saying as to the great need, first of all, of spirituality, and then of the support and leading of the Spirit right through the service. It says, "Rebecca arose, and her maids, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man. And the servant took Rebecca, and went away." That is a most important thing, that Rebecca and her maids, having arisen and availed themselves of the camels, the servant now takes her on. The servant took Rebecca and went his way.

CB When Isaac lifted up his eyes, and behold camels were coming, and then it says Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac and she sprang off the camel, would that be the point in the morning meeting when the saints are together in the feminine idea for Christ to get His portion?

AJG I think so, and it should come in early, should it not, after the Supper has been taken? It is a question of whether there is the spiritual power for it.

RAE Would verse 61 bear out what you have been saying? Not only are the camels and the man there now, but the camels are being ridden and the man is being followed.

AJG Yes, exactly, and I think it is a most affecting thing that it says, "Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold;" as though as he caught sight of it, his heart was moved. I believe there is nothing so affects the heart of Christ as to see the saints moving together as one towards Himself in the power of the Spirit. Because it is really the assembly, I mean, the thing is there as an entity. It is not a lot of separate brethren with their own thoughts, but it is one entity moving in the Spirit's power towards Christ.

LAC You are viewing this as outside of what is connected with wilderness conditions, are you not? We have never viewed the camels as referring to anything else before.

AJG Well, it is power for movement, of course, and it is movement, you might say, out of the wilderness. We come to break bread in the wilderness and the Lord comes in to us there, but it is a question of moving out.

WH So Rebecca and the maidens are available now for the servant to take them on?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HLH At the point where it says that the servant took Rebecca and went away Isaac comes into view immediately. Does it suggest that at that point the servant is nearing the end of his mission and what is before him is nearing its climax?

AJG Quite so, and, of course, the Lord comes before us in the actual emblems. He loves to draw near and it is that that quickens the affections of the saints. So that all this ought not to take long in the actual meeting. But this picture of the camels, the fact that it is the camels that attract Isaac's attention, is, I believe, to stress that thing, that it is a question of the saints moving together as one in the power of the Spirit.

SH As it is said, Those that are led by the Spirit are the sons of God.

AJG Yes, that in a sense is an individual idea, because sons are so many persons. But the assembly is an entity and hence it says we are all baptised in the power of one Spirit into one body and have all been made to drink of one Spirit. The oneness is stressed.

MSS I wondered if the thought of coming into this, as you say, quickly, would be suggested in the statement that the servant took Rebecca. It does not say he took Rebecca and her maids; as though the bride has now come into view.

AJG Well, that is the thought, of course. Rebecca is the great subject. The fact that her maids are brought in is just, I think, to accentuate that idea of what is feminine.

AAT Isaac lifts up his eyes and sees the camels coming and then Rebecca asks the question and the servant says, That is my master. Would that be a certain point in connection with the service of God, "That is my Master"?

AJG One does not like to tie things down too much, because in the service, if things are really in the hands of the Spirit, there is great variety, but it is just, of course, that at that point the Lord is everything. It is my Master; the Spirit is making everything of Christ, later on attention is going to be directed to the Father and then everything will be made of the Father, but for the moment everything is being made of Christ, "That is my Master!"

LAC Would the suggestion here in verse 61, referring to it again in connection with the servant taking Rebecca and going away, be that the Holy Spirit is claiming the assembly for Christ? The assembly is never said to be for the Spirit, is it?

AJG No, the Spirit has come in to serve, to serve the Father and the Son, and to sustain the whole position in response to the way in which the Father is known in the Son.

LAC But here in this chapter in the beginning of that service there is what is brought in by way of refreshment for Himself. Might that not indicate some liberty on our part to refer to the Spirit in the very beginning of the meeting?

AJG Well, if the Spirit affords the liberty, all well and good, but it is the Lord's Supper, it is the Lord that is before us as we come together.

RAF You referred to a point where everything is made of the Lord, would we make room for that after the Supper? I mean, would there be a period in which we would make room for the Spirit to engage us distinctively with the Lord?

AJG I think so. Not so much what He has done, but Himself.

RAE There would not be any undue haste in moving to the Father, would there?

AJG No, quite so, because it says, "Then she took the veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac led her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebecca and she became his wife and he loved her." So that all that is to suggest what Isaac found in Rebecca, and what she found in him, you might say. She became his wife, thoroughly united to him.

MSS Would you say that being led into his mother Sarah's tent would not be on the same level as the assembly, being the bride of Christ? I was wondering if it had an allusion to Israel?

AJG I think dispensationally it has an allusion to the saints at the beginning, at Pentecost, that they really are brought into the place that Israel had forfeited by its crucifixion of Christ. But I think in a more general way you can see that a tent is a kind of provisional idea, and therefore fits in with the present moment where we can enjoy union with Christ in the power of the Spirit before we are actually taken to be with Christ. It is a provisional position for the moment.

MSS I mean, we sometimes do take that as referring to the Lord being compensated for the loss of Israel, by having the assembly. Would that be on a lower level than His having the bride?

AJG Oh, well, the compensation is the bride. It is what the assembly is to Him as a bride really and as His wife. Of course, anything the Lord has in the assembly as compensation for what He has lost in Israel is not the highest view of the assembly, is that what you mean?

MSS Yes, I was thinking of it in relation to the service, whether we would bring it in or whether it would be better to omit it?

AJG I question very much whether it is wise to be too ready to say what ought and what ought not to be done. We need to be guided, of course, by

the truth, by right teaching, but subject to that we need to be guided by spiritual sensibilities at the moment.

LAC That is very helpful, the thought of the truth and what is spiritual being subject to it. Would that not be a help to us too in relation to understanding the truth as taught in scripture as to the Holy Spirit's objective place, whether or not He is to be served as an Object, whether in song or praise or worship?

AJG Well, quite so. He is guiding us into all the truth, and we have just got to be patient so as to be helped in relation to it. Now then we should just refer to Ephesians, because the verse there says, "Through him," that is, through Christ, "we have both," that is literally, Jew and Gentile, "access by one Spirit to the Father." So that while Christ is the Mediator and no one comes to the Father but by Him, this scripture brings in also that in actual access, the Spirit has His place, and the Spirit as *one* Spirit, that is unifying the saints. The allusion, of course, is to Jew and Gentile as made one in the assembly, but the stress is on one Spirit.

LAC What is the force of the expression, through Christ, "Through him"?

AJG Oh, it must be through Him, no one comes unto the Father, the Lord says, but by Me. He is the Mediator, we cannot have to do with the Father except through Christ, we cannot have to do with the Father in any less way. That is very encouraging, it must be through Him, and that means that we are brought into the most intimate place of relationship with Him. But also on our side there is the need of the Spirit.

LAC Would you say a little more as to the Spirit as the power for approach?

AJG We cannot go by ourselves, we need the power of the Spirit.

RS So that it calls for dependence?

AJG It does, and the need of spiritual conditions. There is the need of spirituality and that will make room for the Spirit's ready service to us.

HN Would the Lord's priestly service be involved?

AJG Yes, I suppose so, because in actual fact, the service of the assembly at the present time is carried on in the midst of unholy conditions, and we are not ourselves free of the flesh, although its activities should be rendered nugatory by the Spirit. But that fact remains, that the service of God is being carried on while we are still surrounded by conditions of unholiness, and therefore the idea of the priestly support of Christ, I suppose, rightly enters into it.

LAC Is the Spirit's support ever of a priestly character?

AJG It is, of course, because He is the Holy Spirit. When we speak of "priestly," we are concerned about holiness; what is suitable to the presence of God.

LAC He is said in Romans to make intercession. Is that priestly?

AJG Yes. On the other hand, Christ is *the* High Priest. He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, so that we must not confuse ideas. But if you say, Is there anything priestly connected with the Holy Spirit's service, I would say yes, because He is the Holy Spirit.

JM There is nothing less in the mind of God than that Christ should be formed in us by the Spirit?

AJG Exactly. That is the great thought, the assembly as the body of Christ, as the woman for the Man, that she is in every way the answer to Him; and then being what she is, she can become His wife, and He can take pleasure in her as His wife.

HEAVENLY CALLING AND CHARACTER

Genesis 26: 1 - 35

AJG In the twenty-fourth chapter as we had last week, Isaac is, of course, a type of Christ, but in this chapter Isaac typifies the believer as having been called with a heavenly calling, and as here in testimony in the midst of influences that would tend to rob him of his true character, as heavenly. And therefore it is a question of Isaac knowing how to get the full gain of what God had given him, and to move here consistently with it. The chapter opens with the thought of a famine, and that becomes a test. A famine becomes the occasion for God to tell him not go down to Egypt. His father before him had done that, on the occasion of the previous famine and there had been sorrowful consequences. So here, Jehovah warns Isaac not to go down to Egypt but to dwell in the land. He says, "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and bless thee." So that Egypt is the first thing that has to be overcome or refused by Isaac, and he obeys the divine injunction; and from that time onwards it is a question of the Philistine and the influences of the Philistine that have to be overcome by Isaac. There might be a famine in our own souls, that is to say, a lack of spiritual food and nourishment, and that becomes a test as to whether we are going to resort to what is in character, Egypt, or whether we are going to come under the influence of what is in character, Philistine. Egypt is not Sodom and it is not Babylon. There are three great outstanding types of the world in scripture: Sodom and Egypt and Babylon. Sodom is the world as marked by gross evil, and Babylon is the religious world in which man can glory and obtain glory, but Egypt is just the world as a system where man lives to himself and pleases himself, and does not live to God: and we are warned in John's epistle not to love the world or the things that are in the world. That is, we are tested sometimes as to whether, while maintaining separation from the world as a system, we are going to bring in the principles of the world into our own lives.

HLH Are these conditions of famine allowed purposely by God to cause us to learn to overcome those influences and elements?

AJG I think so. First Egypt and then the Philistine, which is the most insidious, opposing element, and one needing to be constantly overcome, because it is a question of getting into the gain and actual possession of the wealth of what God has given us.

HLH So that if we do have at times a sense of barrenness in our own souls, it can be turned to good account?

AJG It can, if we pay heed to the word. What is seen in this chapter is that Isaac does obey the word and does not go down into Egypt, so that he overcomes *that* danger; but then the next paragraph shows that he comes under the influence of the Philistines, and denies his wife. But then he is apparently recovered from that, and from that time onwards he learns the secret of spiritual prosperity. That is, he sows in the land and receives an hundredfold the same year, and then he is diligent in digging wells. First digging wells that had been stopped up, and then digging fresh wells. So that the latter part of the chapter is marked by spiritual energy on Isaac's part which is rewarded. But the first part shows certain influences that he is in danger of. The second part shows that there are influences opposed all the time but he overcomes them.

EMs Would you tell us what the Philistine element represents?

AJG The Philistine element is always the effort to compass the things of God with the energy of the natural mind, and that is a thing which comes close home to us all. It is full-blown, of course, in the clerical system around us, where education and training are regarded as all that is necessary to take part in the things of God; ignoring what scripture says, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him (1 Corinthians 2: 14), but then the Philistine element comes closer home than what is around us in the religious world. It is a constant danger with us all of attempting, by mental energy and activity, to get into the things of God.

HLH So in whatever degree we may come under the power of these influences we will lose the power that is available to us in the Spirit?

AJG That is the whole point. It is a question of spiritual things being entered upon in the Spirit, and moved in in the Spirit.

JS Would you say that we need to listen to the voice in connection with Egypt?

AJG We do, and we have got the voice - "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world." We have got the voice and hence we are to listen to it, and particularly at any time when there are famine conditions, because that is the time when we are in danger of turning aside to something that is going to accentuate those conditions rather than improve them.

LBr When you say famine conditions, you mean famine conditions amongst us?

AJG Yes, or in one's own soul. It is possible to have famine conditions in one's own soul in the presence of great spiritual plenty.

JS I was thinking of what goes on in one's soul and the voice that is to be adhered to. It says, "Let my son go that he may serve me," and "out of Egypt have I called my son." Would that be a voice?

AJG Yes.

AY The famine conditions in one's soul would be borne out in the book of Ruth where there was a famine there in the land, and Naomi left the 'house of bread' and went down into the land of Moab and there were very serious consequences, but eventually there was recovery?

AJG Yes, quite so, and there was no doubt something governmental in that, owing to the general state of things, because it was in the days when the judges ruled, when everyone did what was right in his own eyes. But then on the other hand Boaz was there in Bethlehem, the mighty man of wealth, and his fields were there; they were all there. When Naomi came back and Ruth with her, she found plenty.

AAT Do you think that the twenty-sixth chapter follows the twenty-fourth, because of the way that the 24th has opened up in connection with the service of the Spirit, and the wells are stopped to try to offset the teaching of the 24th chapter?

AJG Yes, I think so, I think the 26th chapter comes in in order to stimulate us to enter upon and lay hold of all that God has given us. We have got the light of Christ and the assembly in the 24th chapter, which is connected with God's great thoughts of love concerning us, but now we want to enter upon them in power and understand them and enjoy them. And so He says, "Sojourn in *this* land." The land is just the whole thing that God has given us in His love.

HOE What corresponds now to Isaac denying his wife?

AJG Well, he said she was his sister, that is, he did not repudiate her altogether, but it is like maintaining the family side of the truth, that we are children of God and love one another, and get on very well together, but we deny the assembly. The assembly is distinctively heavenly, and it is a question of letting go the heavenly features of the truth, getting along very happily on the family side of things,

that we love one another, but denying the distinctively heavenly character of our calling. The assembly is united to Christ in heaven, and is heavenly.

WH Would you say he was forewarned in verse 3, "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee," said God? Had he kept to that he would not have denied his wife?

AJG Isaac was afraid he would lose his life if he confessed his wife, and that is what we have got to be prepared to do, we have got to be prepared to lose our lives if we are going in for spiritual things.

JHH Is that why the Lord told the disciples not to be elated because the demons were subjected to them, but rather that their names were written in heaven?

AJG Well, He would impress them with that, that they belong to heaven, they are known there, but then the danger is that, while in a sense rejoicing in the truth objectively, we are not prepared for the exercises involved to take it up and make it our own.

AY The Lord said in one of the gospels, "Whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mark 8: 35). Would that have any connection?

AJG I think it would. It is a question now of the Spirit, and if we are to pursue the things of the Spirit we find that, in one way or another, it involves death. In Christianity life is always out of death.

AAT I notice how attention is called to Isaac, "The man became great, and he became continually greater, until he was *very* great." Has that an application in connection with current teaching?

AJG Oh, I think it has an application, not only in connection with the teaching, but in connection with the appropriation of the teaching. That is to say, there may be an abundance of teaching, but if I do not appropriate it, I do not become great in a spiritual sense; but if I appropriate it and make it my own, I am all the time becoming greater spiritually. Not that we want to be occupied with ourselves as to whether we are great or not, but that is the fact, it was as the result of Isaac's sowing in that land that he became great and greater still.

AT Referring to barrenness, in Peter's epistle he speaks of "adding". If these things abound in you, you are neither barren nor unfruitful.

AJG Quite so, there had to be the adding, "In your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge," and so on.

LAC The multiplication here of Isaac's seed is likened to the stars of heaven only, not to the sand by the sea-shore. I was wondering whether that was an intimation from God's side of the heavenly character of things, and whether in His injunction to Isaac to remain in a land where there was a famine, God's thought was that heavenly things would keep him above the conditions around him.

AJG Well, that is good. The stars of heaven stresses what is heavenly as you say, and what is heavenly in testimony, that is what it says in Philippians, "among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

AAT In connection with the Philistine, it could be one of the hindering elements in our understanding the teaching of the truth, is that right?

AJG Yes, it is a constant tendency with us, if one may speak for others, to attempt to compass divine things just by mental energy and activity. That is, reading ministry assiduously and speaking about it and thinking that we can compass it that way. Well, now, no one would say a word against reading ministry assiduously, but we can only understand divine things in the Spirit; we can only move in them in the Spirit; and that involves not only paying attention to the teaching, but it involves a good deal of secret exercise, and prayer, and dependence, and seeking the Lord, and being prepared to be searched as to anything that we are allowing that is hindering the operation of the Spirit. So that it is first of all a question of "sowing", which means that you have to dig deep, and then it is a question of "digging wells", which means that you have got to get rid of obstructions. All that enters into the chapter.

CBl Spiritual growth is in view in that way?

AJG Yes, exactly.

MSS It says in verse 1, Isaac went to Abimelech the king of the Philistines. Would that be the tendency you referred to, to turn to the natural mind and natural energy?

AJG Well, very likely. We read in the gospel about Zacchaeus, his trouble was that he was little of stature, and that is the trouble with most of us in divine things. And he thought he would overcome it by great energy, and climbing up a tree, and so on, but the Lord says, Come down; you are not going to arrive at things that way. He says, "Today I must remain in thy house." He has got to start at the beginning and let the Lord have His place, and regulate him and so on.

TG Was Jehovah appearing to Isaac and speaking about Abraham to him, and what He had promised Abraham, to help him to overcome this Philistine element?

AJG Quite so, and God says to Isaac, "Because that Abraham hearkened to my voice," He is really encouraging him by the example of those that had gone before him - his spiritual father, you might say. He was, of course, his natural father, but I mean, we are to be encouraged by the example of those that have gone before us.

SC We sometimes sing, "Who is a pardoning God like thee, or who has grace so rich so free." In spite of Isaac going to the king of the Philistines,

in verse 2 we see the Lord appearing to him and speaking to him.

AJG Yes, I do not know that there was anything exactly wrong in Isaac going to the king of the Philistines, because Gerar was part of the land. He was not leaving the land to go there, the Philistines were there in the land. It only shows how very near the Philistine is to us, that he is in the land. Egypt is not the land. He was warned not to go down to Egypt, and he obeyed.

JHH It says, "And the men of the place asked about his wife." Is that not very often a very great test to us, when men begin to inquire as to the truth of the assembly?

AJG And as to whether we are practically holding it, so that it is part of us. I mean, we are all tested as to how far we are really heavenly, not that we want to be occupied with ourselves or want to appear to be anything that we are not, only we are, in fact, heavenly, and the danger is lest we surrender what is proper to a heavenly people and take lower ground; we may be content with the family side of things and getting on very well and happily together. But then that may very easily develop into what is social, and may even lend itself to what is Egyptian if we are not careful.

CB Would you say that the apostle Paul was afraid of the Philistine element where it says, at Corinth, he was with them in much fear and trembling, and he determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified?

AJG I would, I believe he was very afraid of it, and hence he brings in the cross in order to make room for the Spirit.

EMs What do you think would keep us on heavenly lines?

AJG First of all, the light that we are heavenly, and that, not as connected with ourselves, but connecting it with the sense that the assembly is united to Christ. It is a great thing to keep Christ before us, and a sense of the distinctive place that the assembly has with Christ. But then as to our own side of things, and moving into them, the only thing that I can suggest is getting to God about things. Pray without ceasing, it says. That costs us a good deal more than sitting down and reading a book, but it is more effective in the long run.

Ques What do the names of these wells convey?

AJG The first thing is that there were certain wells which Abraham had dug which the Philistines had stopped up, and then Isaac re-dug them, and gave them the same names that Abraham had given them. That is to say, that as we take up the truth in energy in our souls, it is the same truth as has been known before. We do not attempt to give fresh names to things. If it is the truth of the body, we call it the truth of the body, if it is the truth of eternal life, we call it the truth of eternal life, and so on, but it is a question of getting it in freshness and power in our own souls.

LAC You mean, if scripture calls it "The Lord's Supper", we call it by that name?

AJG Yes, quite so. And before we come to the question of the wells there is the question of sowing. It says, "Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold; and Jehovah blessed him," and then we get the verse that was referred to, following on that, "And the man became great, and he became continually greater, until he was very great"; so that raises the question as to where we sow.

MSS The word of God to Abraham would keep Isaac in constant dependence. It says, "Go not down into Egypt, dwell in the land that I shall tell thee of", as though he did not become fully enlightened all at once.

AJG I think that is right. In Psalm 37 it says, "Dwell in the land and feed on faithfulness," and that is a remarkable statement. I believe you could write that over this chapter - "Dwell in the land and feed on faithfulness." I believe the Spirit of God is the great expression to us of the faithfulness of God, that notwithstanding all the departure from the truth that has marked the assembly in its public history, the Spirit of God has remained with us all the time and is now getting His place, because God is faithful and wants us to come into the good of all that His love has given us.

SP Is there a possibility, like Isaac here, of our not maintaining the truth of the assembly?

AJG There is, exactly. That was what was involved in his denying his wife. He would say that she was his sister but he would not say that she was his wife. That is, he denied union. He would acknowledge that she was related to him, we may acknowledge that we are born of God and of the divine family, and love one another, but would deny union. And that is the great thing, the distinctive feature that the assembly is united to Christ in heaven, and therefore is heavenly. We may be afraid of what men would do or think.

RS We would like to know just here what is the distinction or difference between union and unity.

AJG Unity is that we are all one, but union is the result of being united to Christ by the Spirit. But the saints must be united together in affection in the Spirit, so that there is one entity, before the reality of union with Christ by the Spirit can be known. And hence the importance of unity among ourselves, but that is not everything. That is essential, but then the distinctive feature of the assembly is that by the Spirit, she is united to Christ, she is His wife to be with Him in everything, and therefore she is heavenly.

CB What is the thought of sowing?

AJG Well, if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit we shall of the Spirit reap life eternal, so that it is a question of what we sow to, where we sow, the direction in which we sow. It is very much a question of what we give our minds and time to.

LAC There seems to have been no Philistine attack until the sowing begins and the fruit is seen, then the attack seems to be threefold; firstly, envy, and the effort to stop the wells, and then the final expression of hatred, on the part of the king himself.

AJG I think that just shows that there is this element hindering, or opposing, all the time, but the one who has really got the heavenly calling in his heart, will just go on quietly with the Spirit.

HLH But it would be a suggestion that, as Isaac sowed he would have felt the need of the waters that the well would provide, to aid him in his sowing and to bring fruit out?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that, but it is as though as soon as he sowed God honoured him, because it says, he received in the *same* year a hundredfold, and Jehovah blessed him, as though, Isaac having now arrived at that, that the answer to the famine is to sow, and to sow in the right place; God at once rewarded him.

BBSnr Why is it that people marked by envy are in possession of this land?

AJG You might ask why envy is found in the heart of a Christian, but it is found there, alas; sometimes. We always carry the Philistine with us, and the only thing to do is to see that he is judged in the power of the Spirit.

RAE Would the fact that is says, in the same year he received an hundredfold, be to impress us that as we begin to move on these spiritual lines we find God near to help us?

AJG That is it, I am sure, and we get the same thing later on in the chapter, it says in verse 24, "And Jehovah appeared to him the *same* night," when he

went up to Beer-sheba, and then again in verse 32, "It came to pass the *same* day"; as though three times in the chapter God would give us the sense that He is pleased with Isaac in the movements that he is making and encouraging him in them.

EMe And would "the year" too, suggest that the exercise was carried right through?

AJG That is so, you mean having to face all the different seasons? Quite so, because God has ordered different seasons, all with a view to promoting fertility.

AKH Why does the matter of his wife, and the exercises connected with it, have to be gone through before the sowing is entered upon?

AJG Well, I have no doubt that it would come home to Isaac what he had done in denying his wife, and the danger connected with it, and God had graciously delivered him; that would all enter into his exercise now to proceed on right lines. If I am afraid to take up the ground of being heavenly, well I ought to get to the Lord about it. But I am heavenly so why should I be unprepared to be concerned, at any rate, to walk in keeping with it?

AKH Does it indicate in any way the idea that what we might prosper in individually is in view of contributing to what the assembly stands for in relation to Christ?

AJG Yes, quite so. I suppose the greatness that marked Isaac, when it says, He became great, and he became continually greater until he was very great, is simply a question, for us, of increase of spiritual power. And then it goes on to speak of the substance he had, possessions of flocks, possessions of herds, and a great number of servants; so that he developed in spiritual substance as well, and all that would be material for sacrifice. He had a great number of servants, that is, he was developing in serving love really, in the Spirit of Christ; the idea of servants was greatly accentuated with him.

LBr What would be the thought then of the Philistines stopping all this up with earth?

AJG There is one thought connected with sowing, but another connected with wells. Sowing is a question of the exercise undertaken with a view to fruitfulness, which only God can give, I might sow with great diligence, but unless God gives the increase there will be nothing, so that it only impresses one with one's dependence. However much I sow, if God does not give the increase there is nothing in it. So that while you have got to sow, it forces dependence on you.

WH And from the time he sows, Jehovah blessed him, but the Philistines envied him.

AJG Yes, the Philistine will envy, because we all recognise, when a brother has spiritual wealth and spiritual liberty, that he is greater than anyone who has mental ability and brings it into the things of God.

EM A brother referred a little while ago to the water, his wells being very essential, having sown. And even that is dependence, because the Spirit is God, it is God Himself here.

AJG Yes, quite so. But then wells, of course, involve the Spirit Himself, as giving life and freshness, and they have to be dug, and they can be choked. The exercise of digging is just to get rid of what is obstructing, because in each well there is a fountain which springs up; but then the well has got to be dug in order to provide free course for the fountain.

CBl Whatever exercises we may have, we need to be dependent on the Spirit for this divine freshness?

AJG Quite so, exactly. To hold the truth in freshness so that we have really got it as our own in power.

MSS The word as to quenching the Spirit in Thessalonians - would what is Philistine have that effect?

AJG It would, I am sure. We might quench the Spirit in many ways, we might quench it in ourselves or we might quench it in others.

AAT And we may quench it too when we are together assembly-wise?

AJG Quite so.

SC What would we learn from the servants digging in the valley in verse 19?

AJG We read first of all in verse 17 that Isaac departed thence and pitched his camp in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And then they dig in the valley. That is a good place to dwell, as the note says, it is really a valley with a torrent running through it. So there is the combination of thought of what the valley suggests, in lowliness, and the power and freshness of the Spirit which the torrent suggests. It is a good thing to dwell there.

AY As a result of Isaac's great substance, spiritually, as you have been saying, I suppose he becomes so great, applying it to us, that we would be in this world bearing a heavenly character in such a way, that the Philistines would say, Go from us; Do you not think that that would be a good thing for us?

AJG It would, quite so. The superiority of what is spiritual is recognised. But here first of all it says of Isaac that, "All the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped them and filled them with earth." But then it says in verse 18, "And Isaac dug again the wells of water, that they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and that the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them." That is, he is concerned to have the truth that has been known in the past, in freshness and life and reality. And so he takes up the exercise of digging so that he might have it in that wav.

GHP Would the torrent suggest that which is unceasing in power, suggestive of the Spirit with us for ever?

AJG Yes, I would think so.

RAE Is there anything suggested in the wells being filled with "earth", or as the alternative reading is, "dust"?

AJG Mentality in the things of God is as dry as dust.

RAE I wondered if it was really the nothingness of the first man? We have the same thought in Corinthians, have we not? "Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly, such also the heavenly ones."

AJG Quite so.

LAC Are there not two thoughts here in the first section connected with the agricultural idea, in connection with digging and sowing, but here it seems that the wells and the water from them is needed for the flocks - the shepherds contend over them. Would it be the recovery of the truth in view of the flock, those to whom it belongs, the saints of God?

AJG Quite so, but I would not limit it to the thought of the flock, although as you say, it is the herdsmen or shepherds that contend, so evidently they are concerned about the water for the flocks, but the water is needed, of course, to water the land as well, it is needed all the way through. That is why the Lord is giving such prominence to the Spirit now, that we should all really come into the gain of the Spirit, so that heavenly things may be entered upon in spiritual intelligence and moved in in freshness and in power.

RS Is not the "earth" of which the wells were filled suggestive of the tendency with us to cleave to earthly things?

AJG Yes, I think so. We could quite well apply it in that way.

AAT Abraham's wells seem to have been dug, but there are other wells, are there not?

AJG Yes, showing that there are continual possibilities open before us in the Spirit, first of all, to have what our fathers have known, to have it for ourselves in spiritual freshness, but then also to realise that there is still more, the Spirit has come to guide us into all the truth.

MSS The water in verse 19 is distinguished, it is called the well of "springing water", or "living water".

AJG That was the result of their digging in the valley. That is, it is not now a question of only digging to recover the wells that they had previously had, but they were going on digging.

Ques Might we not gain something from the fact this is in the land of the promise?

AJG And the land of promise is that which God has promised to His saints, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, wherewith He has blessed us. But it is a question of our entering upon it so that we not only know that we have the title to these things, but that we can say something about them, and enjoy them, and move in them.

RS Is not the aspect of the Spirit there as the Earnest of the inheritance?

AJG That would enter into it, certainly.

CB Would you say digging wells is really making the truth our own. We can give account of things ourselves.

AJG Yes, and the exercise on our part simply consists in getting rid of what is obstructing, because the fountain is there, but the well has got to be dug, so that every obstruction to the fountain springing up has to be removed. So that there is free course made for the Spirit of God, and as that takes place, things open up in freshness. So the old things are known again in renewed freshness and called by the same names, and then there are fresh wells that have not been dug before. It is the constant wealth that there is in the Spirit.

FHP As we make progress too, would you say that we must be prepared for opposition? The shepherds strove with Isaac's shepherds saying, the water is ours.

AJG Yes, exactly. There are two forms of opposition, first, stopping up the wells, and then they do not do that any longer, but they claim the wells, there is contention and they claim them. When any fresh feature of the truth is brought out, it is really opposed by the natural mind trying to take it on at

once, and by doing so, robbing it of its freshness. But then that is met by the energy in Isaac to go on digging fresh wells. He simply goes on in energy with the exercise of making room for the Spirit, until he reaches a point that the Philistine cannot any longer contend.

CB So that the natural man cannot contend or keep up with the spiritual man at all?

AJG No, exactly. That is it.

CB Would you say the assembly is a heavenly vessel down here in testimony in the midst of all these tests?

AJG Quite so. Constantly beset by these tests, Egypt not far off and the danger of going there, when there is anything answering to a famine, and then the Philistine element always at hand.

CB So that we notice even in David's day they became giants, and they had to defeat the Philistines right through.

AJG Yes.

HLH These shepherds who contended for the wells had no hand in the digging of them, it was Isaac's servants who dug them.

AJG Quite so. And as soon as they had dug and brought to light a fresh well, then the Philistines come along and claim it.

HLH The contention and opposition was from the other side, and it is a question of how we carry ourselves in the presence of those conditions, I suppose.

AJG It is, exactly. It says, "The bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all," it is a question of going on in the Spirit.

SP Would you say that at every fresh feature of the truth that is being presented, it is the point of the enemy to seek to hinder it?

AJG That is it, and if he cannot stop up the well with earth, he will try and hinder it by claiming it in his own power and in the spirit of contention, and as he does so he really robs it of all its freshness.

LAC There seems to be no direct intimation that Isaac surrendered the wells. There is the quarrelling and the striving, but do you think that it is to be noted, that although the enemy may attack, that is no reason for us to surrender the truth in any way?

AJG No, you do not surrender it, but it says, "He removed thence", verse 22, "and dug another well; and they did not strive for that." I think the thought is

that the contention is just met by going on in the Spirit, realising that the Spirit will always open up fresh features of the truth to us. But what has been dug is not surrendered of course, but there is just this exercise of digging another well so that the truth can be held in freshness and in power without being questioned.

AY Would you say that we see that character developed in Paul especially at Ephesus, where he was often attacked but he was able in the power of the Spirit to maintain things and carry them through right on to the end?

AJG Yes, so that he had in the end, declared to them all the counsel of God.

MC Would you say that "Rehoboth" would suggest what was in the power of the overcomer?

AJG Well, it is like that in principle.

AAT So in connection with what the Lord is giving us, should we be looking for a new well?

AJG I think so. It is very encouraging that in the Spirit there is no limit to what God may show us. Not that we want to be on the line of novelties, or anything of that sort, we have to beware of that, but on the other hand the Spirit searches all things, yea, the depths of God; and He has been given so that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.

MSS Would you help us as to the meaning of "Rehoboth" in soul history?

AJG Well, it means "Broadways" - that is, plenty of room. That is, the confirmation in one's soul that the more we go on in the Spirit the more we shall find plenty of room, plenty of expansion in divine things, and also superiority over the natural mind. Spiritual things are not compassable by the natural mind, and that is why spiritual ministry often seems somewhat elusive in character, you cannot pin it down as you would natural things. It is because divine things cannot be compassed by the natural mind, they can only be known in the Spirit.

HOE Would this new well be keeping on positive lines? We do not turn aside to have an argument on things, we just keep on positive lines going on with the Spirit.

AJG Quite so.

SC Does Isaac make headway now from verse 22?

AJG Yes, it says, "And he went up thence to Beer-sheba." Beer-sheba alludes, I think, to the faithfulness of God.

TG That would mean that if we maintain faithfulness, that God would appear to us and confirm us in the truth, so that we may overcome?

AJG Yes, and I think we get an increasing sense that God is faithful. The Comforter with us stresses His readiness to guide into all the truth, and it is a great witness to us of the faithfulness of God. You think of all that has come in in the public history of the church, and how the truth that was ministered by Paul was all given up - it is a wonderful thing if we are beginning to touch the truth in any degree, in recovery now. It is a witness to us of the faithfulness of God, and that shows itself in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

TG That would help us to go on in the midst of all that is opposed in this faithfulness to God?

AJG It would indeed.

LBr And after a time the Lord might cause some to come to us, and desire to be with us, referring to verse 28.

AJG Well, what they said was not all true really, but still Isaac could afford to be gracious to them.

TG What would the altar that Isaac built in verse 25, be to us now?

AJG The altar refers to our private links with God. He built an altar *there*, that is, he had arrived at something in his soul. It is a very good thing if we arrive in our souls at a real appreciation of the presence of the Spirit of God and why it is that the Lord is stressing it at the present time. It is a witness to the faithfulness of God, and that He intends us to arrive at all the truth.

AAT Do you think the Spirit might open up something beyond Paul's ministry?

AJG I doubt if anything would be opened up to the saints that was not opened up to Paul. This thought of digging wells is to be continued by us all the time, and the more it is resorted to, the more freshness there will be found amongst us. We cannot enter into the truth apart from the Holy Spirit, and that is what digging wells would mean. Verse 26 is a question of man's power and influence and sociability and whether we are going to come under the influence of these things. Isaac shows them grace but he sends them away. Isaac is tested all along the way, and we are all along the line tested as to whether we are going to continue in the maintenance of heavenly features or whether we are going to fall under one thing or the other.

Finally we get Isaac tested as to this family, in Esau's wives; it says, "And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and to Rebecca." It is as though the enemy was all the while trying to hinder or divert Isaac and when he proved faithful as to

the Spirit, the enemy was now trying to get in through his family. It shows by his grief of mind that Isaac was a man of feeling, but there is no suggestion of his making allowance for or condoning the matter. From verse 12 onwards God shows His approval three times by giving increase the *same* year, and appearing to him the *same* night, and by his servants coming the *same* day, and telling him of the water they had found.