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ETERNAL LIFE (1)

John 3:12-16; John 3:35,36; John 4:13,14; John 6:32-35; John 6:47-58

AJG The subject of eternal life is one that is constantly being revived and stressed among us, because it is only as we know more and more of eternal life that we become furnished and enriched in view of the service of God, and also because it is that which makes us superior to things around us, so as to be here for God; and one thing that requires to be pressed in relation to it is the need of faith on our part. It is to be noticed in the scriptures read and in others too, how much the thought of believing enters into them, that it is not simply confidence in God, but rather that our outlook is toward unseen things, toward Christ Himself, and toward the things that are connected with Him, and this is perhaps one of our points of greatest weakness, the great need among us of active faith. The Holy Spirit will link Himself in His service to us and His power with faith, but faith is essential, and hence John tells us that he writes his gospel so that we might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in his name." So that life in the name of the Christ, the Son of God, that is, life in relation to the whole range of interests and glory connected with Jesus known in that light, is to be realised on the principle of believing - that believing we might have life in His name. Hence where we commenced reading in chapter 3 the Lord raises the question of unbelief; He says, "If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?" and then He brings in eternal life as the great object that has been in the mind of God in giving His only begotten Son. So that at the outset we should be impressed with the importance in the sight of God of eternal life for us, that it was in His mind in giving His only begotten Son. But as we have been saying, it is to be entered upon on the principle of active faith in us.

FGH Would you say what you have in mind in the expression "active faith"?

AJG Paul says in the second epistle to the Corinthians, "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal," 2 Corinthians 4:18. So that there is a lot that enters into that - "while we look not," he says, "at the things that are seen," involving certain purpose of heart as to the direction in which our outlook is going to be; while we look not at the things that are seen but at the things that are unseen, and that is what I had in mind in speaking of active faith.

ELM Would eternal life be the crown of John's ministry?

AJG I am not sure whether we can say it is the crown exactly because he leads further in John 17, but I believe it is a great point in his ministry that we should have life in the name of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, and then in the epistle that we should know that we have eternal life.

HDT Is it rather more the sphere in which God is operating?

AJG I think so. It contemplates a sphere. It says, "passed out of death into life" (John 5: 24) and the verse we read at the end of chapter 3 says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand," so that there is introduced the idea of a range of interests, of living interests, into which we are to find a part already.

HDT I was thinking in a certain sense it was basic in relation to John's line of things. There are many things that are added - association with Christ as His brethren, and sonship, and a great many other things that are involved; but I wondered whether eternal life was the prime thought, that God is operating in relation to Christ out of death, and the sphere that is opened up to us as a result of that.

AJG Yes, I think that is right as far as I understand. It is clear that eternal life has reference to heavenly things, so that the Lord speaks of heavenly things to Nicodemus.

GAL I was thinking of faith. Do you not think we are rather weak in laying hold of the great truth of the incarnation? "This life is in his Son" (1 John 5: 11), and I was thinking of verse 4 of chapter 1, "In him was life." He has brought it in in His own Person, hence faith is to be connected with the Son of God.

AJG Yes, I think so, and that is most affecting that such great matters are in mind, as you say; the incarnation, and then as chapter 6 has it, the Son of man having ascended up where He was before, and the Spirit having come. All these are matters that enter into our entrance into eternal life, are they not?

WMcK In regard to the matter of active faith, is the passage in Numbers 21 basic to what you have in mind? That is to say, everyone that looked upon the serpent lived.

AJG Yes, I think so.

GAL Do not both the scriptures that you started with in chapter 3 clearly place eternal life on the other side of death?

AJG That is an important matter, because there is the idea of life, which sometimes in John's writings is the same thing as eternal life but sometimes

has a wider thought; but eternal life is definitely connected with an order of things beyond death.

HDT That is just what I had in mind in my earlier remark, that in a certain sense it is the foundation of what John has to present, is it not?

AJG I think it is, and hence it comes in very early in the instruction of the gospel because in one sense the third chapter introduces the beginning of the teaching, not, of course, that there is not valuable teaching in chapters one and two, but John 3 begins at new birth and the teaching develops systematically from that point, and I thought it was striking that eternal life is brought in so early.

EJH Why does the word 'things' appear so much? "If I have said the earthly *things* to you," and then "heavenly *things*," the Lord says.

AJG Well, because life consists in things as well as in persons. That is, there are affections and interests, and eternal life has relation to a heavenly order of things, a heavenly order of relationships and affections first, but also to things; so that it says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand."

EJH I thought perhaps what you said as to a range of interests enters very definitely into the matter, so that we cannot claim to be in the enjoyment of this precious blessing unless we are linked up with the things that are precious to Christ?

AJG Quite so. They all centre in the Person of the Son, and God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

HDT Would it be diverting you to ask what the connection is between the kingdom and eternal life, seeing they both come into this chapter?

AJG I suppose the kingdom is necessary because of our condition. We need to be brought under the authority of the word. Perhaps you would help us yourself.

HDT I was just thinking that new birth being connected with the kingdom, we got an impression that in the initial operations of God in the soul, it was all in relation to another sphere of things altogether; what Mr. Raven called 'the moral sway of God in the soul of a person' is really the kingdom, and it gives us an understanding that God is operating in relation to Christ out of death, and He bestows eternal life, so that we may come into a sphere of things in which His pleasure is unalterably secured.

AJG Yes, I think that is right; hence the moral side of things must come in, and so the Lord says, "the Son of man *must* be lifted up," John 3: 14.

AC So is the serpent of brass an aspect of the death of Christ as clearing the ground of every moral question, so that we may be free to take up the enjoyment of eternal life?

AJG Yes, I think so.

GAL Then the kingdom involves essentially an administration. There is the heavenly side as well as the earthly side of the kingdom. I wondered whether verses 35 and 36 give us the full scope of it, the glory of the administration of the Son. One of the things that are administered is eternal life.

AJG I think it is a great thing to understand that there is a range of holy affections and interests that are eternal in character of which the Son is the centre and the Father the great source, into which already we have entrance in the Holy Spirit. So that eternal life, although it is known on earth, is essentially heavenly in its character, and it is eternal in its character, so that in the Spirit we may touch things which are in their character eternal, and in a moment we shall find ourselves in them. But the point is how much we know of them now.

GAL It must be eternal because of the Person from whom it proceeds, and the order of life that it is.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AVW I was wondering if you could help us in relation to what the Lord means in saying "we" in verse 11. Has the Lord in mind that others are with Him in relation to this kingdom?

AJG I am not sure whether that is not the "we" of dignity. "We speak that which we know and we bear witness of that which we have seen." There is a sense in which the plural is used, not as meaning many persons or more than one person, but more in the sense of dignity. I am not sure whether that is not the case here.

DMcI Is that why the Lord lays emphasis on what He says? He says, "I say the heavenly things."

AJG I think there is a great deal of importance to be attached to the words of Christ, indeed in chapter 6 Peter says "thou hast words of life eternal" (verse 68), that is, as they companied with the Lord what the Lord spoke to them about was the things connected with life eternal. He did not engage them with the politics of the world and that kind of thing. He engaged them with eternal

life, and Peter recognised that and he says "thou hast words of life eternal." We need to pay attention to the words of Jesus which John's gospel is made up of almost entirely.

EJH Would that suggest a continuous flow, and a continuous unfolding? There is nothing stationary or stagnant in it.

AJG No, there is not.

HDT Indeed, John says, "He whom God has sent, speaks the words of God," John 3: 34. That gives further emphasis to what you are saying.

AJG I think it is a most touching thing how near eternal things are brought to us now, the Son having come and having accomplished redemption and ascended up where He was before, the Spirit having been given, all that is in the heart of God is opened to us and it is connected with eternal things bound up with the Father and the Son.

ELM Would the knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" be one of the component parts of eternal life, one of the principal thoughts?

AJG Yes, I think so, that is what it says, "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John 17: 3.

GAL Do you think that perhaps it is a little easier to centre faith on a man in the glory than to understand the blessed dignity of God having sent His Son down here to bring in life, to bring in His words, to make known His mind, and bring everything in in His own blessed Person? I have been struck with the glorious dignity of the incarnation. How much is brought in in the Person of the Son, how everything is there substantially in a Person, "In him is life," and one has felt it is the special urge of John's ministry to bring us into the gain of that.

AJG I am sure that is right.

HDT Would it be equally true to say these things are only available to us redemption having been accomplished?

AJG Exactly. So that God has given us eternal life but this life is in His Son. It is in His Son, of course, as out of death and ascended.

GAL But the thought of incarnation of course attached to that?

AJG Exactly.

JGW I wondered if in that way verse 13 would have a bearing. Although the Lord was here, He says at the end of verse 13, "The Son of man who is in heaven." Is the life seen in the Person and the sphere in heaven?

AJG I think that is right. The stress on 'heaven' is to be noted, because I think we must all realise how much we are bound by earth in our outlook and thoughts, whereas eternal life is essentially heavenly - the Son of man who is in heaven.

ECM Would it be right to say that the assembly is the sphere where eternal life is enjoyed and these heavenly things are opened up, the Spirit being here in the assembly?

AJG Yes, quite so. The circle of the brethren is the sphere where things are enjoyed. At the same time the initial presentation of it in John's gospel is rather on the individual line. As we go on we find it is enjoyed in the circle of the brethren, and only there, but at the same time the gospel is presenting the truth systematically and insisting on the importance of the individual having it.

EJH That is confirmed by "The water which I shall give *him* shall become in *him* a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life," John 4: 14.

AJG Yes, exactly.

TJG So that the individual is capacitated to enjoy the matter collectively, as the truth is taken on systematically.

AJG That is it, and I believe it is important to stress this, perhaps not unduly, but still it should be stressed, because some years ago a great deal of emphasis was laid, and rightly so, on salvation being in the assembly; it has been greatly stressed, and rightly so, that young people find salvation in keeping with the saints and so on, and one does not want to say a word to weaken that because that is most important; but at the same time that in itself does not constitute eternal life. There must be the personal entering into it in the power of faith and the Spirit to touch the reality of eternal life.

WHL Would Hebrews 11 bear on it: "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," Hebrews 11: 1.

AJG Quite so, and then what has been quoted from chapter 4, "the water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life."

AB So would chapters 3 and 4 result in practical deliverance, chapter 3 having in mind a new order of things in contrast to a world where men are perishing,

and then chapter 4 the uplifting character of the Spirit linking us with this new scene?

AJG Yes, I think so and really underlying worship, for chapter 4 as we know leads on to worship, not that it is our subject, but it is significant that underlying the thought of worship is this entrance into eternal life.

HDT So that the functioning of the assembly would be greatly enriched if the personnel had this substance in their souls?

AJG That is just what I had in mind, and no amount of mere consorting with the brethren will give us eternal life in actual power. It is important to consort with the brethren but the individual side of it is essential.

HDT I am very glad you have stressed the thought of what is personal, because one has noticed in many a collective position in the Scriptures, in Paul's ministry, the personal side is introduced. We habitually speak of the address to Corinth as being to "The assembly of God, which is in Corinth," 1 Corinthians 1: 2, but Paul immediately says: "To those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints," as though he is not leaving the personal side out of any position.

AJG No.

HAH Does the type help us in regard of this reference to the wilderness and not perishing, in view of entrance into the sphere of eternal life?

AJG Well, eternal life is the great means whereby we are saved from perishing, that is from falling out, so that you might say Caleb, although he did not actually enter the land for forty years, yet he had been in it as one of the spies and he had it in his heart. He spoke according to what was in his heart, so that you might say that in his heart he was in the land through the forty years when the people were wandering in the wilderness; so that he goes through.

HGH Is it set here by divine necessity. It is a matter either of eternal life or of perishing.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AB So that would Caleb illustrate one who prized these great thoughts of God in saying, "If Jehovah delight in us, He will bring us into this land" (Numbers 14: 8) - the individual prizing of what is being presented.

AJG Yes, I think so, and that we are to start by being impressed that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal".(John 3: 16), and then in the

next chapter there is the great gift of the Spirit in view of eternal life. These are great transactions on the part of the Father and the Son in view of our having eternal life.

Ques One feels the importance of what you remarked earlier, as to the thought of God. The great thought of God was eternal life for man, as I understand it. It was God's intention that men should have eternal life. Does that mean that it was in the mind of God before time was? Is that what was in your mind?

AJG I think we can say that because it says in the epistle to Titus, "In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the ages of time," Titus 1: 2. So that I think it is quite right to say that it has been in God's mind for man before the ages of time.

HDT So it says in the epistle of Paul to Timothy, "According to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and has brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings," 2 Timothy 1: 9, 10. It is pretty much the same, is it not?

AJG Yes, it is.

GM Going back for a moment to the matter of personal securing of eternal life, is chapter 9 the first and great example of one who secured it personally?

AJG You refer to the blind man who was cast out and came to appreciate Jesus as the Son of God.

GM "I believe, Lord, and he did him homage," chapter 9: 38.

AJG Yes, I think so.

FWK With regard to the personal side, would you say a word as to the link between the kingdom and eternal life?

AJG We were saying earlier that there must be the moral side; there must be subjection, the moral sway of God in the soul. Obviously God will not give the Holy Spirit to an insubject person, and eternal life can only be entered upon in the Spirit; hence there must be the kingdom bringing in subjection on our part.

GAL According to the first scripture the thing begins in looking in faith on Jesus, the Son of man lifted up. That is where it begins and we see it is in the purpose of God. He has sent His Son for that great end.

AJG Quite so, but then it goes on further in that faith attaches to Jesus glorified, risen and ascended. We have to believe on Him lifted up in order to see how divine love in Christ has met every moral question that existed, so that we might receive the Spirit; but then the Spirit having been received connects us in our affections and faith with Christ in another scene.

GAL So that in chapter 3 it is in view of faith,

and in chapter 4 it is communicated by the power of the Spirit.

WMcK Is faith in that way the capacity to apprehend the matter objectively and the Spirit the power to apprehend it subjectively?

AJG Yes, I think that is right, so that it would be right, I suppose, broadly to say that the gospel of John presents the truth objectively, and the epistle of John presents the subjective side of things. In the gospel of John, for instance, the Lord says that He Himself is the truth. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," John 14: 6. In the epistle it says the Spirit is the truth, so that those are the two sides we have to keep together in balance.

EJH Might we say in one sense, therefore, that in the gospel of John you have the Person, and in the epistle of John you have the persons who are like Him, formed according to the truth, being expressive of it and enjoying it together?

AJG Yes, but the Spirit Himself being the truth. Perhaps we shall come to that, if the Lord will, later on.

ELM I was wondering if the importance of what we have before us is emphasised in, "He that believes on the Son has life eternal, and he that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him," John 3: 36. To refuse it you are objectionable to God.

AJG Yes, exactly. It seems to me to be very attractive that the One who is presented as an object of faith is apprehended as the Beloved Son, the centre of affections, and not only as the beloved Son but as a centre of a system of things too. So that it is an entirely different world outside of this in which eternal life is known.

ELM And that is present.

AJG It is.

HDT I was going to ask whether, in many believers' minds, eternal life is synonymous with eternal security, and that has really had the effect of lowering the value of it in our minds.

AJG Exactly, and I think it should be a greatly stimulating and at the same time exercising thing that we have in the Spirit the power to live in relation to

another world.

AAG You referred earlier to faith in relation to the Spirit. Had you in mind that we need faith to get the gain of what you have just said?

AJG Yes, I think so. Faith lays hold on what is unseen and the things that are unseen are in character eternal and the Spirit links Himself with faith; but if we are characterised by unbelief or indolence or unwillingness to have our attention held in relation to unseen things the Spirit cannot help us very much.

ECM Does the thought of consciousness enter into it? Faith does not give you consciousness. You get the consciousness by the Spirit.

AJG Yes, I think so but the Spirit has been greatly emphasised of recent years and I think we are beginning to realise the importance of it; but I believe this side is also very important that there must be faith on our part, active faith.

HDT The presence of the Spirit does not negate the importance of faith, because God's dispensation is in faith.

AJG Exactly.

HDT I remember Mr. Coates saying, years ago, that the Spirit of God operated within the limits of faith. I thought that was a very good way of putting it.

AJG Yes, I believe that is helpful because you get the same thing in principle with the Lord when He was here that He could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief. The Lord was limited because of the conditions of unbelief in those amongst whom He was, and similarly the Spirit is limited if there are conditions of unbelief with us.

GAL I wondered if you would say just a word about chapter 4, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is"? It seems there is a great deal in that.

AJG Well, quite so, because everything depends on our apprehension of the Person, the Person of Christ - "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name," John 20: 31.

AWP As to what you have just said with regard to apprehension, is life particularly connected with light at the initial stage in our history? We have to apprehend it necessitated the Person Himself coming into the scene in order that we should apprehend both life and light in Him.

AJG Yes, He is Himself the true light. You have the two things brought together in the beginning of John, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men," John 1: 4. Then He came in as the true Light. I think Mr. Raven used to say that God operates in the light. The first thing He did was to command light and then He brought life into existence.

HFR Would you say something as to the way that John stresses the present tense? This word 'believes' runs right through this matter, so that it is almost a state that we might be enjoying one day and not enjoying the next day.

AJG Yes, it is a characteristic thought.

WMcK We have been taught that the forty days that the Lord was here after His resurrection sets out the idea of eternal life. Does that explain why He stressed the need of faith in the disciples at the beginning of it? I am thinking of the end of the gospels, and the lack of faith in the disciples to apprehend what was really taking place.

AJG Yes, quite so. So He manifests Himself,

presented Himself living, it says in the first chapter of the Acts, after He had suffered. Another thing to realise is that the life in which we are to have part is life beyond death, and therefore it involves the principle of suffering; it involves that principle for us that life is reached by way of suffering. The Lord has set it out; of course, for Him the suffering was real and there are no sufferings to be compared with His, but yet He sets out that idea so that He presented Himself living after He had suffered, as though to impress the disciples with the fact that life beyond death is to be entered upon on that principle of suffering.

TJG Is that why the apostle links the thought of suffering in the scripture you have referred to earlier (2 Corinthians 6) with the active or characteristic faith?

AJG Yes, he says, "for we also believe, therefore also we speak" (2 Corinthians 4: 13) and he indicates that in that faith he was able to accept any degree of suffering "knowing that he who has raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us also with Jesus," 2 Corinthians 4: 14.

FVW Is John's presentation of eternal life in contrast to Paul's view of it? Rather an inward matter, something that the believer can always retire into, the knowledge of divine Persons?

AJG Yes, I think so, it lies in the power there is in the Spirit.

FVW I was wondering whether Paul looks at it in connection with the day to come.

AJG Yes, very much. That is why I suggested looking at it from John's writings because it is the present aspect that we so much need.

HDT The more the believer retires into his links with the Persons of the Godhead, the less he individualises himself in his blessings.

AJG Well, I am sure of that because it is all saints that are in the mind of God, so that you cannot individualise yourself in your outlook though you must enter into things individually. In your outlook you have all saints in your heart, so that John in Patmos was undoubtedly in the enjoyment of eternal life, but he was isolated personally. In his outlook he was embracing all the brethren.

HDT The more we enjoy things in our souls the more we have the consciousness that it is the very thing God has in mind for every believer.

AJG Quite.

EJH The blessings and the people and the inheritance were all in the heart of Caleb.

AJG Yes, they were. So he says, "if the Lord delight in us he will bring us in."

JGW I wonder if you would open out what you have already referred to, "the Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand. He that believes on the Son has life eternal." I take that to be the enjoyment, the life being in the Son - is that correct? And I wondered if affection would mark us off from those who are not subject.

AJG Well, quite so. There are those who are not subject, who do not see life, they have no part in these things at all, but I think it is immensely encouraging to realise that there is a system of affection subsisting now of which the Son is the centre and object, and the Father is the great source. It is a great system, not only of affections but of interests; all things are delivered into His hand and we have entrance into it as having part with Christ, the power being in the Spirit.

ECM Does it mean that eternal life as you are presenting it according to John is lifted on to a much higher plane than Israel will enjoy it in a coming day, involving what is heavenly, heavenly relationships.

AJG Yes, exactly. We have often heard what Mr. Darby said about it that it is an out of the world heavenly condition of relationship and being.

GAL Is that the point in chapter 4, "the water which I shall give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life." Mr. Raven said, 'It springs up to its source, which is in God Himself.' Quite so. The Spirit will not occupy us with anything where Christ is not, we may rest assured of that. The Spirit is always faithful to Christ and to the Father, and so the Spirit becomes in the believer, *becomes* "in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life," John 4: 14.

HDT So that it is not presented only as a blessing bestowed, but as a condition in which God is operating. It is a necessity from the divine point of view if God is to have man in conditions in which man can be at home with God. This is a necessity.

AJG It is indeed, and hence we have the very affecting circumstance that the Son has become Man and has accomplished redemption and the Spirit has been given, so that we might have life in Him; so that we are set in the very centre of love in Christ.

CJHD Does the enjoyment of this really give us independence of the sources of refreshment in this world. According to Numbers 21, they say, "We will not drink water out of the wells; on the king's road will we go until we have passed thy border." Is that after the experience of the serpent lifted up and the springing up of the well? Then we have no more occasion to drink water out of the wells of this world.

AJG Yes, that is good. All they wanted to do was to get through. Their eyes really were on the land. That is the position now with us if we are at all in the enjoyment of this, that in regard of present things all we want to do is to get through, but as you say, the Spirit makes us independent of sources of natural satisfaction.

AB Does chapter 4 of John have in mind the Spirit having a developing and increasing place with us? "The water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life."

AJG I think so. It *becomes* that. That is what you had in mind, was it? It becomes that and, of course, that involves that on our part we must see that obstructions to the springing up are removed, it is a fountain springing up; the fountain is there and it will spring up provided there are no obstructions.

TJG Does that word 'become' mean that the Holy Spirit will thus work if those obstructions are removed? Is that the meaning of the word 'become'?

AJG I think so. Not, of course, that the Lord is drawing attention to obstructions or anything of that sort, but He uses the figure of a fountain, a fountain in a well, that is really what it is; so that the Spirit is a fountain in the believer and obviously if the fountain is to spring up there must be the removing of any obstructions.

HDT Would not that help us to recognise the Spirit's activities with us? I was thinking, from Paul's point of view, the Spirit is largely given to assist us in our infirmities and bring us into deliverance, and set us up in relation to the things of God; but I wondered whether from John's point of view it was a divine link

with what was eternal in its character. It would help us to recognise His strivings at times with us to produce feelings and longings after that which can only be found in God Himself.

AJG Yes, I am sure. So that Paul in writing to the Philippians says, "I have *learned*, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," Philippians 4: 11. That is a remarkable example of a man who is in the gain of the Spirit; that he is not affected by natural conditions but he has learned in whatever state he is to be content, because the Spirit connects him with another scene, and with Christ the centre of it.

EJH Does he not say, "to be content within myself," Philippians 4: 11.

AJG "To be satisfied in myself," exactly.

HDT He knows *how* to be abased and *how* to abound. They are very striking expressions, are they not?

AJG Yes.

GAL Then he goes on to say, "My God." Is not that where his soul lives?

AJG Yes, quite so.

EGH Would you say a word as to the matter of drinking, "every one who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever." I would like a little help as to the matter of drinking.

AJG I think that shows our side, that divine things do not work automatically, that while it is all of gift and free grace on God's part, yet there is something that we have to do, we have to drink. That is, we have to appropriate what the Spirit is ready to give us. It has often been pointed out that in Exodus 17 where the rock is smitten there is no mention of the people drinking; it is the provision from the divine side; but when you come to Numbers the people drink.

FCH Would the practical working out of it be in the giving place to the Spirit?

AJG Quite so, that is an expression we often use, 'giving place to the Spirit' but we have to see that time is made for these things with a certain purpose of heart. It is a question of what our minds are on.

HDT It is a challenge, too, as to where we really find our satisfaction.

AJG Yes. "They that are according to flesh *mind* the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit," Romans 8: 5.

PT "Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth," Colossians 3: 2.

AJG Yes, that comes into it.

WFF Would you say a word as to the difference between Nicodemus in chapter 3 and the woman in chapter 4, bearing in mind especially the fact that Nicodemus does not seem to respond much to the teaching but the woman herself reacts to it immediately..

AJG It just shows how much anything that flesh can accredit itself with becomes a hindrance to us. Nicodemus has much that he could accredit himself with in the eyes of men, a ruler of the Jews and so on, and so the Lord goes into things basically and says to him, "ye must be born again," as though to teach him that all that he might attach to himself naturally was of no value in the things of God. When it comes to the woman, she was of such a character as would readily embrace the free gift of God, the grace of God; she was, you might say, almost an outcast.

FVW In regard to the Lord's words in chapter 4, "shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life," is it going too far to connect it with what the Lord speaks of later, worshipping the Father?

AJG No, I do not think it goes too far to connect it with that. At any rate worshipping the Father is what results from it and what we are empowered for, too.

HDT Would it not in actual fact greatly enrich the souls of the saints in the service of God in the assembly? For we need to take heavenly ground as associated with Christ, and the Spirit is the power for it, and if individually we are in the good of what the Lord said to this woman there would be greater power in the morning meeting.

AJG Much greater and more substance, too. Not simply the liberty and freshness but what we often need is substance. How much can we say about the land? How much do we really know of God and of Christ in His own sphere?

FVW So that life eternal is spoken of as a proposal, so to speak, in chapter 3, but is it more defined in chapter 4, going perhaps beyond the individual position which is so necessary and basic?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think the idea in chapter 4 is that there is power for it in the Spirit. It is to make us appreciate the Spirit and that the Spirit will operate in that direction. The Spirit is not operating according to John 4 in connection with things down here. In Romans 8 the Spirit is the power to enable us to

fulfil responsibility in the life down here; John 4 is not that but the Spirit becomes the fountain, springing up to eternal life.

GAL As to what the Lord says as to the Father to the woman, is it not well to recognise the very purpose for which the Lord came was to reveal the Father? He had nothing short of that in mind.

AJG No, exactly.

FWK Do Psalm 133 and 134 help in this connection? In Psalm 133, "There hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore." In the next Psalm, the closing Psalm, we have worship and praise to Jehovah.

AJG Quite so. They illustrate what we are saying.

ELM Would you say a word as to any difference between the Father seeking "such as his worshippers" and then what follows, "God is a spirit and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." Is that progressive?

AJG God must be the final thought. The Father seeks such as His worshippers, that is God revealed in that name of grace; but then as we come into the liberty and the blessing of that we are brought into relations with God. God must be the final thought and eternal life involves that man is in right relations with God.

ELM It is, "My Father, and your Father ... My God, and your God," John 20: 17.

AJG "My Father and your Father ... My God and your God," so that God is the final thought and man before Him in the Person of Christ, but man wholly according to God and in right relations with God. So that when we come to the end of the epistle we have "He," that is Christ, "is the true God" on the one hand but He is also "eternal life." That is, the idea is set out in Him of man in right relations with God.

HDT That is what the Lord had in mind in John 17, is it not? "This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The whole matter is really set out objectively in Him, is it not?

AJG Quite so.

HGH Is the thought in John 4 the thought of entering into the enjoyment of eternal life? The expression "never thirst for ever" precedes the thought of "springing up into eternal life." Would you say a word about the difference. "Never thirst for ever" in comparison with "eternal life"?

AJG I think the Lord is making it attractive so that the woman should really embrace it. It is a very attractive proposal that we can be completely satisfied,

"never thirst for ever."

EJH The Lord did not tell her to leave her water-pot, but she left it in the light of that, would you say?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HDT The more we have known what it is to thirst here, the more we shall appreciate the opportunity of never thirsting for ever.

AJG Exactly, and it sets you up in independence of all that is around, so that you carry your supplies with you. "The water that I shall give him becomes *in him*," so the believer carries his supplies with him, he is not dependent upon surrounding circumstances.

FW You have that in John at Patmos, as you have said, do you not? "I, John, your brother."

AJG You do, quite so.

AB Does chapter 6 bring in a more substantial thought, bringing in the thought of food?

AJG It does, it brings in the thought of maintenance or sustenance of life and there is the Person of Christ again. The Spirit is the great point in chapter 4, now we come back to the Person of Christ in chapter 6.

WW In chapter 6, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves." Is that on the line of what is subjective?

AJG Well, it is. I think the great point in chapter 6 to start with is that the Lord presents Himself as the food, the bread of life; but He says, "It is not Moses that has given you the bread out of heaven; but my Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world," and then He says, "*I* am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall *never* hunger, and he that believes on me shall *never* thirst at any time." That is similar to what the Lord said about the Spirit in chapter 4, but now it is the Lord personally as the bread of life, and as One who has come out of heaven, that is characteristically heavenly.

HDT But not to sustain life here, but the thought is to die.

AJG That is a most important thing because some years ago when there was conflict as to eternal life there was an effort to make the bread of life the same thing as the manna and to reduce eternal life to life according to God in present circumstances, but that is not the idea of eternal life at all.

GAL It is very striking what the Lord says "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died." He fixes the position on them. "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that one may eat of it and not die."

HDT That life is only enjoyed in the acceptance of death here.

AJG Quite so.

GAL On the other side of death.

AJG Quite so.

DMcI Why does the Lord say, "My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven"? He had spoken of Himself as giving the Spirit, but now, as to the bread, He says, "My Father."

AJG I think He is connecting us with the Father, the Father indeed as the source of all these thoughts. He is really drawing out our affections to the Father. He says, "My Father," He is speaking in that affectionate way.

HDT Is it not remarkable that the Lord should find such freedom in speaking of His Father to those who were opposing Him tooth and nail, you might say? Much of this comes out in answer to the Pharisees and Jews. I wondered whether it shows how near the Father was to His own heart, if we may speak reverently, that He did not cease to speak of Him even in such circumstances.

AJG No, quite so.

ELM Does the Lord carry forward His ministry in chapter 4? In verse 35 He says, "He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst at any time." Would that be the linking of the two thoughts together, what is in the Spirit and what is in the bread sustaining?

AJG Yes, I think so. It shows that Christ Himself is the One to be appropriated. When we speak of appropriating we mean that our minds are engaged with Christ and His things and then the mind becomes the inlet to the affections.

WMcK Does it involve the apprehension and appropriation of another order of man, the order of man that is indigenous to heaven? Is that right?

AJG Yes, I think so. I have been rather struck with that, the frequent references to coming down out of heaven, not simply from heaven but out of heaven. It is an expression involving character.

TJG As to the Lord saying, "My Father," in the presence of hostility, is that spirit open to us? Would it show the superiority and restfulness of eternal life enjoyed in hostile conditions?

AJG Well, quite so. I think when the Lord speaks of "My Father" like that it shows how near the Father and His thoughts were to the heart of Christ; we get something similar in the word to Sardis where the Lord says, "My God" - "I have not found thy works complete before my God," and then the constant references to "My God" in Philadelphia. I think it shows how near God was to the heart of Christ, and all that God was looking for was dear to the heart of Christ.

HDT Would that show that the thing was extant at that time in Christ's manhood here, but is it not touching that it is only available to us through His precious death?

AJG Quite so.

FVW The Lord connects eternal life with "My Father" in this chapter in verse 40, whereas it is "God" in chapter 3: Would you say a word about the distinction there?

AJG Well, it is God, of course, but it is a question of the way the Lord is speaking of Him. The Lord is speaking of Him in that affectionate way as having come from God to give effect to His will, but in all that He is doing He is moving in the affections of Son.

DMcI Why does He then speak of "the living Father" in verse 57? "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father."

AJG It shows I think that as down here in manhood the Lord had an object before Him, a personal object, and that was His Father. That is to be brought before us, that we are to have a personal object before us and that is Christ. Christ where He is. "He that eats me shall live also on account of me." Christianity does not become a system of ideas, it centres in a Person, and a range of interests that centre in Him.

HDT And that Person out of death.

AJG Quite so.

HFR The Father seems to have His own peculiar joy as we are occupied with Christ. It says here in verse 40, "This is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son, and believes on him, should have life eternal." And then in chapter 12 the Lord says, "I know that *His* commandment is life eternal," chapter 12: 50.

AJG Well, exactly. I believe if we can go away with an impression of what we have in verse 35 of chapter 3, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand. He that believes on the Son has life eternal," it may

perhaps enlarge many of us. There is a system of affection and of wide interests centring in Christ, having its origin in the Father and held in relation to the Father, and we have part in it already in the Spirit.

EJH Is not the Father often spoken of in John's gospel as the Source in relation to a system of grace?

AJG Yes.

ELM Is not that strengthened in chapter 3, that wrath is connected with God and not with the Father?

AJG Quite so. The Father judges no one. So that the Father is the Head, you might say, of the economy in which God is known, so that that impress of the name of the Father is to give character to the economy, and yet God must judge the world, but He commits judgment to the Son; so that no thought of judgment shall attach itself to the Father's name.

HDT Is it a striking thing, in that sense, that what we touch in the knowledge of God known in the economy is to continue for eternity?

AJG Exactly, that is what I feel is so important, that we can have entrance now in the Spirit into eternity. It is really eternity. We do not know what moment we may be ushered into eternity. We know, as a matter of what one may call the arrangement of things, that the millennium is to come between now and the eternal day, but the blessings we enter into in this dispensation are eternal in character, and when we are taken to be with Christ we enter upon eternal conditions. We do not know how near eternity is to us and we may find ourselves in it at any moment.

SAVW Should we not give thanks to the Father for drawing us to the Son?

AJG We certainly should because no one comes to Him except the Father draws him.

ACC Is it significant that it is in the present tense, "the Father loves the Son"? Is it the lovability of the Person? "The Father loves the Son" in the present tense.

AJG He loves the Son. It is a settled disposition of love; it is a settled system of love. That is the great thing to get into our minds, it is a settled system of love and of divine interests, too, of a wide extent into which we have part now in the Spirit.

AAG And is verse 40 of chapter 6 directly connected with that, "Everyone that sees" - or *beholds* - "the Son"? Is it seeing Him in that character as the centre of the Father's affections?

AJG Yes, I think so, as though He holds the attention in that way, just as Moses turned aside to see the great sight of the burning bush.

MHT Is it of interest to see that in verse 53 the word for "eat" is different from that employed in the following verse, and the tense is also different? In the one case it is "shall have eaten" implying appropriation to satisfy hunger, and the other is the present tense, "He that eats," implying eating for enjoyment?

AJG Quite so, it is the characteristic thought.

ETERNAL LIFE (2)

John 6: 54-63; John 10:16-18; John 10:22-30; John 17:1-3

AJG We scarcely had time this morning to go into chapter 6 as fully as is desirable, so I thought we should return to it this afternoon. Chapter 6, as we were saying, has in mind how spiritual life is sustained, and deals with the matter, as chapters 3 and 4 do also, from the individual standpoint, the early chapters in John's gospel having in view the building up of the believer's constitution in order to his being able to fit into his place in the assembly, because the assembly is the great thought before the mind of God. But it is essential that every brother and sister should be in it livingly, and hence the early chapters of John's gospel have that in mind. Then we shall see, as the Lord helps us, that when we come to chapter 10 and onwards the collective position is in view. It was remarked this morning that we have in verse 53 of chapter 6, "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves," that being an initial thought; and then following on that, "He that *eats* my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal," that being a characteristic and continuous thought. The Lord presents Himself in chapter 6 as the bread of life, as He says, "I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven: if any one shall have eaten of this bread he shall live for ever," and then he immediately adds, "but the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." This shows that while we have first of all to apprehend the idea that Christ is Himself the food which we are to appropriate continually if we would live, when it comes to the matter of our appropriation we have first of all to learn to eat His flesh and drink His blood, which evidently is an allusion to His death. So that the import of His death is to be brought home to us continually, and our affections fed upon it before we come to the further thought that he who eats Me, even he shall live on account of Me.

AB Does the question of eating His flesh and drinking His blood involve the breaking with natural things here?

AJG Yes, I think it does. It helps us greatly to understand that He came down from heaven and took flesh and blood condition in order by His death to terminate that condition and bring in in Himself beyond death as Man a new character of life altogether in which we are given part in the Spirit. Hence we are continually to feed on the great fact of His having come down from heaven and died. That will help us, as you say, to become detached more and more from natural things, because the things of nature hold us much more than we

realise, even when perhaps we have learned in some degree to judge the flesh.

TJG What do you understand by, "Ye have no *life in yourselves*"?

AJG Well, it is a real thing. It is not just a question of seeing certain thoughts in Scripture, but it is a real thing. That was abundantly true in the early chapters of the Acts, how superior the brethren were to the conditions around them, and especially when opposition arose, how superior they were. It was the power of life.

HDT So that you have the expression in the Acts, "The words of this life," Acts 5: 20.

AJG Exactly. That is a very striking expression. The apostles were told by the angel when he opened the door of the prison to "stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of *this* life," Acts 5: 20. That is the kind of life that could be seen in Jerusalem in those who belonged to Christ.

HDT It found its impulse in a Man in heaven.

AJG Yes, exactly. It is power in the Spirit.

EJH Does it link on with what you said this morning, in chapter 4, "Shall become in him," verse 14?

AJG Yes, "become in him." I think it is very encouraging to see as has often been remarked, that John writes in view of the last days, the days when all that Paul set up had gone to pieces, but he brings in the great principle of life, so that no thought of God is allowed to lapse after all, it goes through in the energy of life in those who are affected by John's teaching.

HDT Do you think it conveys the ability potentially to take in the whole range of divine thoughts in contrast to the apprehension of certain lines of truth? Sometimes we try to build things on points, whereas life would mean that there is ability in the Spirit to grasp what God has before Him in relation to Christ and in relation to the saints and the assembly, and where there is life in that sense, there is ability potentially to enter into everything.

AJG I believe that is right, because life is wonderfully free, it is not hedged about, so to speak.

HDT I was wondering whether it was really the answer to what we so easily drop into, a kind of rules and regulations. If things are developed in life the saints are to be depended upon apprehending what God has in view to convey.

AJG I think we may perhaps come to that more tomorrow, if the Lord will, when we come to "the Spirit is the truth," which is a most important thing.

HGH Is this verse 54 an extension of verse 48, "I am the bread of life."

AJG I think so. I think, "I am the bread of life" is that the Lord indicates that life is to be sustained on the principle of appropriating Himself. That is, our minds dwell on Him and the affections follow. But then when it comes to the question of how it is to be done, we are first to appropriate His death, and the fact that He came in from heaven for the express purpose of closing up one order of life and opening up another.

WMcK Does the appropriation of His death involve in some sense suffering in us? I am thinking of the breaking of the links of what binds us to what is natural.

AJG Yes, it must do, and I think it is well that we should see that, that in order to reach the order of life which is eternal in character, which God has before Him, we have at least in principle to enter into suffering. The coming in of sin has involved suffering for God and for Christ, and we are to enter into it too.

EJH Do you think that is why many say, "This word is hard, who can hear it"? verse 60.

AJG Yes, I think it is. But then you see God uses the influence of love to draw us over, and so it is the Son of man who gives His life, it is the flesh and blood of the Son of man, that is, Christ's own death is to appeal to our hearts' affections.

AB Would it move our hearts that the Lord was pleased in grace to terminate the condition in which He once was in the favour of God here as a Man in view of these greater thoughts being established?

AJG Yes, I think so. Because after all, although the Lord's pathway here was one of much suffering and sorrow, "Man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53: 3) it says, yet on the other hand it was a life of continual joy - He speaks of "my joy" - and much pleasure to God. But that life was laid down, which meant He surrendered it, and God surrendered it, but it was laid down with a view to opening up in Himself beyond death an order of life in which we are given part.

HDT Is that conveyed in Hebrews 2 in Paul's language, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons o glory to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings" verse 10? Is not that the same thing, the same thought, wrapped up in different

language? The Lord has reached His place on high through sufferings and we have part with Him there.

AJG I think so, and it helps to impress us with the reality of divine love, the depth of divine love, which has taken a suffering way to reach its end.

ACC Would the ark going into Jordan and the victuals that were taken to cross over, enter into this passage?

AJG I think this passage very much corresponds with that, except of course that is looking at the position collectively and this, as we were saying, is the individual reaching the truth so that he is built up in it. But I think this is very much that idea, that is to say it is victuals, the kind of food that will strengthen us to pass over.

WW Would verse 57 enter into what you have been speaking of? "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me."

AJG Well, it follows on that which we have been speaking of. It is a step further than eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood. The Lord says in verse 56, "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in *me* and I in *him*." That is, it develops personal links of affection between the believer and Christ, and that leads on to verse 57, "As the living Father has sent me, and *I* live on account of the Father, *he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me."

WET Why does the Lord add in the end of verse 54, and I will raise him up at the last day?

AJG The Lord says that several times in this chapter, "I will raise him up at the last day." I think it is to assure us that as we move on these lines we shall go right through and the Lord will exercise His power and rights in regard of us in the last day, "I will raise him up at the last day." We go right through in life.

EJH Would that mean that all that is being built into the souls of the saints today on these lines, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, is to be carried over?

AJG Yes. He says earlier, "This is the will of him that has sent me, that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing," verse 39. It is not there the saints personally but rather the totality of the work of God in the saints.

TJG So it says, "I will raise *it* up."

AJG Yes.

HDT That will be the great consummation of all God's ways. The last day will be the final vindication of all that God put His hand to. Daniel continuing:

"Thou shalt ... stand in thy lot at the end of the days," Daniel 12: 13. Was not he really preserved in life. It is the same principle whether in the Old Testament or the New.

AJG Yes, except of course, that we have to mark the distinction between the present dispensation and all that went before.

HDT I was thinking that all God's operations were in view of the incarnation, and the redemption accomplished by Christ, and all will coalesce to that end.

DJH And is raising up at the last day more in view of what is for divine pleasure than for the comfort of our hearts in the present dispensation?

AJG Well, it would be. Everything is committed into the hands of Christ, it is safe there. But I think it is very interesting and affecting that this chapter develops personal links between the believer and Christ, so that in each individual believer it is contemplated that there should be these personal links established, so that we live by Him and on account of Him. You can see that it is really underlying what is proper to the assembly, that the assembly is peculiarly linked up in affection and interest with Christ personally, and this is paving the way for it in the souls of the saints individually.

AB Would this involve the ability to continue in the testimony until the Lord comes, in view of what is stated in the end of the chapter?

AJG It clearly has that in mind. But what have you in mind as regards the end of the chapter?

AB Well, there are some who turned away, who said the saying is too hard, but those who are nourished by Christ can continue because they love Him and can depend on Him, because He has words of eternal life.

AJG Quite so.

GAL The *I* is emphatic, "*I* will raise him up at the last day." Is it not really to draw attention to His glorious Son?

AJG I think so. It is immense when we think of all that is committed to the Son to carry through - and how He carries it through - at the moment not in the display of great power outwardly but on this principle of what He becomes in the affections of each individual believer.

FWK Does the type of Barzillai help at this point? There was an appreciation of David, but he would not go to Jerusalem; there was not the intimacy.

AJG Yes, he throws a very sorrowful light by way of contrast on this chapter, that he could be faithful to David in the wilderness position, but is not prepared to move with him into his own circle of interests.

EJH Even though David says, "I will maintain thee."

AJG "I will maintain thee with me in Jerusalem," 2 Samuel 19: 33.

HDT We should be thankful that the Spirit of God has given us an indication of what does go over in Chimham, the thought of "longing." Is not that to develop a desire with us not to stop short of what is heavenly, and is not that really the principle that goes over? It is not merely an intellectual going over; that is not what is in mind at all.

AJG And therefore if we can once get in our souls the sense of the unique place the assembly has in the affections of Christ and that we belong to it, and all that Christ is to take up as Man we are to enter into with Him, I think it will greatly help us, because it will then become true what we sang this morning.

"No place can fully please us
Where Thou, O Lord, art not." (56:4)

It is the sense that we cannot live in anything where Christ is not.

HFR Does the introduction of drinking - the Lord introduces drinking here - does that suggest the satisfaction that we find in these intimate relations.

AJG I think so.

HDT May I ask whether Mr. B. had in mind in connection with that that there were some who walked no more with Him? Is there some suggestion in that that the interim is to be filled out with walking with Christ?

AJG I am sure there is. We shall come to that more in chapter 10 where the saints are regarded as a flock moving together under the leading of the shepherd. So that they all move together in one direction.

FWT Would Paul be appropriating this chapter when he says, "The love of the Christ constrains us ... he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised," 2 Corinthians 5: 14, 15.

AJG Yes. That helps very much, that there are those who live. We are among them, and the intention is that we should not live to ourselves but "to him who died for them and has been raised." So that He is raised from among the dead and there has His own range of interests, and we are to live in relation to that.

FGH Is the intimacy seen especially in verse 56? "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him."

AJG I think so. That makes it much more personal than the previous verse. In verse 54 it says, "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal ..." So that it develops certain mutuality of affection and interest between Christ and the believer.

HDT What we may speak of as understanding.

AJG Quite so. A life bound up with one another, speaking reverently.

JFP Would you say something as to the "living Father" - that expression in this connection?

AJG I think it is to stress that all this is living. The Lord when He was here said, "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father." That is, it was a personal matter with Christ. It was the whole range of the Father's interests and purpose to which the Lord was devoted, but at the same time the Father personally was the great Object in relation to which the Lord lived, and now He says, "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me."

ELM Would the objective in the Lord's mind be involved in verse 62? "If then ye see the Son of man ascend up where he was before." I wondered if this is the highway we have to take to reach that; to be found with Him the other side of death in living associations?

AJG I think so. I suppose those who said, "this word is hard" were not in the good of that. The Lord says that the answer to it is that, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before"? "Where he was before" is a very striking thing, because it shows how all that had preceded has been a deliberate movement on the part of One of the Godhead.

HH 'The Spirit quickening' - what would be the difference between that and having life in yourselves; appropriating Christ?

AJG Well, if we have life in ourselves it is the result of the quickening of the Spirit, but now the Lord is saying that it is the Spirit that quickens, as though to remind us that we are dependent on the Spirit, that we cannot take these things up merely mentally. If we know a little of their power we may be able to say a little of what they import. In fact it is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing.

JGW Is there any significance in the fact that the Spirit records that Jesus spoke these things in the synagogue, teaching in Capernaum? Is it to bring into relief that the assembly is a vessel of life greater than all that existed in the synagogue system?

AJG I suppose He would have in mind to reach all those in whom God was working, they would be found in the synagogue. So Paul in his service always went into the synagogue first if there was one, because he knew he would find there any in whom God was working. But actually the Lord says it is only those in whom God is working who respond to the truth.

HDT Is it because this ministry took place in Capernaum that the Lord could say it has been "exalted to heaven," Luke 10: 15?

AJG Yes, exactly.

HDT Because they refused Him, it was cast down to hell, but doesn't this show the character of His ministry?

AJG I think it does, yes.

DMcI Is there a distinction between what the Lord says about eating My flesh and drinking My blood and then the verse that we quoted so much, "He also who eats me"?

AJG Quite so. It is a question of Christ Himself, that is to say we first appropriate His death, we eat His flesh and drink His blood, but then He is no longer in flesh and blood condition. "He ... who eats me" connects the affections with the One who has died, but known now in His own sphere as the One who has ascended up where He was, before.

GAL This teaching covers the whole range of the Lord's activities; His coming in from heaven; His death and His ascension.

AJG Yes, exactly.

SR Would it correspond with the "old corn of the land"?

AJG I think it probably does, save that that again is in a collective setting. The old corn of the land was not only what belonged to the land, but it was there before they got there. The note on Joshua 5: 11 shows that it is viewed not only as indigenous to the land but as there before they got there.

GAL Is this not really on the way to what the Lord opens up more fully in John 14, the whole Christian position. He says "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you," opening up the full force of our relationships in the dispensation, but verse 56 would be clearly basic to that, would it not?

AJG Yes, I think so. It seems to me that as we move on on this line there is really no limit to what it may lead us into, "he also who eats me shall live also on account of me." I question very much whether we can place any limit on what is involved in that.

TJG The footnote helping us too, not only the fact of His living but the fact of His being, it would show the illimitable matter in mind.

AJG Yes, but I think it is important to understand that this is teaching for the individual in order that he may enter intelligently and livingly into what belongs to the assembly, so as Mr. L. says, it really underlies what we have in chapter 14 and other chapters which deal with the assembly position.

EJH Do you think, therefore, the Lord would have rejoiced in the confession and confirmation of personal links with Himself in Peter's answer. "Lord, to whom shall we go," verse 68?

AJG Quite so. I think we can see what an effect it will have on our assemblies locally if every brother and every sister is developed and strengthened in these personal links with Christ and in enjoying the heavenly things as appropriating Christ. It will make an immense difference to our meetings and to what there is for God.

FWK Would Philippians 3 be Paul's way of speaking of these truths, "That I may ... know him" (verse 10) - the great objective that Paul had; to be conformable to His death. Would that be the appropriation of His death and then to know Him, would it fit into this chapter?

AJG I think it would. One has often been impressed with that, that such a spiritual man as Paul, just at the end of his course, should use language like that, "that I may ... know him," Philippians 3: 9, 10. We might have thought Paul did know Him already, and he did, probably more than anybody else, and yet that is his language, "that I may ... know him," as though the more he knew Him the more he wanted to know Him, and the more there was to know.

WET Would the truth of verse 57 help us to really merge in the testimonial position? I was thinking of the appropriation as being formed as the result of feeding, but the result of that will be that the testimonial side is seen as the saints are on these lines.

AJG I think that is right. All these chapters really result in the believer being made superior to the world in which he is actually moving according to God's will, and if we are to be here according to God in the testimonial position we need to start by being lifted out of it and made superior to it.

ALO Are personal links with Christ sometimes formed through breakdown?

AJG I have no doubt they are. That is to say, as the grace of Christ is learned in breakdown then the heart becomes more attached to Him. But why do you say that, because we do not want to put a premium on breakdown, do we?

ALO No; but I was thinking of Peter. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

AJG I am sure that greatly affected him.

FVW Would the reference to the flesh here allude to the condition into which the Lord came *up to* His death, or do you carry it *beyond* death?

AJG That is a question, and I would not like to be dogmatic. Of course, in resurrection the Lord appeared in flesh and bones condition. He says, "a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having," Luke 24: 39. On the other hand I think as a rule where His flesh is mentioned it refers to the condition into which He entered before He died, so that Hebrews 5 speaks of "the days of his flesh" (verse 7), evidently alluding to the time here before He died. Certainly in this scripture it has in mind that He entered into flesh and blood condition, the condition in which we are, in order to terminate it by death.

HDT There is one thing clear; His manhood continues.

AJG His manhood continues. There is no question about that.

FVW So that would the "he that eateth me" connect with that more? It is a greater thought in a sense, without making undue comparisons.

AJG "He that eateth me" refers to appropriating Christ as He is now, as Man, of course, but in a glorious condition.

FVW So that Paul in Galatians says, "The life that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me," chapter 2: 20. Is that in that connection?

AJG Yes.

FVW Not so much what he says in Corinthians; that "He was determined to know nothing among them, but Jesus Christ and him crucified," 1 Corinthians 2: 2. Would that be more the language of one who eats the flesh and comes to a judgment of the flesh?

AJG Well, this is not so much a question of coming to a judgment of the flesh, although that might be included in it, but I think this is more a question of the setting aside of the natural in favour of the spiritual. The judgment of the flesh is really involved in chapter 4, what the Spirit brings us to, so that the woman was entirely set free from her fleshly tendencies in the power of the Spirit, but this is a question more of overcoming what is natural in favour of what is spiritual.

ECM Is it not really the end of human life?

AJG It is really.

WMcK Is it a matter of building up an assembly constitution in that sense?

AJG That is exactly what it has in mind.

WMcK I was wondering if you would be free to say a few words in regard of verse 62, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where He was before"? Is it a similar expression to what we have in Ephesians? Far above all heavens: how far does that go?

AJG I do not think the point is so much how far it goes. Chapter 4 of Ephesians is to stress the exceeding dominance of the position from which the Lord is now operating, but this is that He has ascended up where He was before. That is, it is really stressing His deity and the fact that it is a divine Person who has deliberately moved in this way to bring in through death new conditions of life in manhood in Himself in which we are given part in the Spirit.

HDT Does it not introduce a touch of purpose into it all?

AJG I think it does, and it is the answer to our eating His flesh and drinking His blood. If we amply feed on death and nothing more there is nothing positive, but the answer to it is a new condition, of life outside of death in the Son of man who has ascended up where He was before.

GAL So that after this ministry which is to test faith and to bring in the truth of His death, the Spirit of God says "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who would deliver him up." It is quite clear that purpose underlies it all but that point is not brought in until the whole testing of the ministry is put out.

AJG No, quite so.

ELM Are there two great lines in the Lord's movements, the coming down *out* of heaven and from heaven, one great line, and the other the ascending.

AJG I think so, and therefore we are to understand that eternal life involves a heavenly order of things.

HDT And something that was determined in, you might say, the aforetime; before the Lord took manhood.

AJG Exactly, I believe if we could get an impression of what is heavenly it might perhaps incite us to go in for these things more, because God has brought in the heavens and earth in order to give us a means of getting some impression of how superior the heavenly things are above earthly things, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isaiah 55: 9.

EJH And are we hindered sometimes in the realisation of that by thinking that the flesh can profit a little in these things? The totality of *nothing* has to be accepted as the Lord's own words (verse 63).

AJG The flesh profits nothing.

HDT Do you think that practically we sometimes perhaps hardly learn that lesson until our desires are set in this direction and then we find that the flesh profits nothing?

AJG I think we do, and find out how inveterate is the opposition to the Spirit in the flesh, and hence that helps to deepen in us dependence.

ELM Would all this be in view of the formation of the heavenly man? "As is the heavenly one, such are the heavenly ones"? (1 Corinthians 15: 48).

AJG Yes, and heavenly tastes and heavenly interests, heavenly wealth too. You can understand that as Rebecca followed out her purpose to go "I will go" - and moved along with the servant, you can understand how she would become acquainted with the range of Isaac's interests, how Abraham had given everything to him - the whole scope of things she would be getting into her heart as she moved along with the servant.

HFR It immediately speaks of "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before" (verse 62) - is that to encourage us that He would bring out these features with us too?

AJG Yes.

AB Would it give us the desire to know Him in His greatness in the new sphere in which He is?

AJG I think so. You often find that it comes out, sometimes on Lord's day morning in the service, that brethren have got a real appreciation of Jesus as He was here, but we are tested very much as to how much we know of Him as He is and where He is.

GAL Then reverting to Mr. M.'s earlier remark, does it not lead on to the great thought that the Spirit presents in John 13, "Knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God," John 13: 3. Does that not bring out both the dignity of His Person and the glory of His operations?

AJG Yes, I think so. That is the line in John's gospel that He has come out definitely from God and goes to God, so that if He dies it is not presented as dying, but departing out of the world to the Father.

CJHD Would there be a link at all between verse 62 and that remarkable expression in 2 Kings 2, where Elijah says "Thou hast asked a hard thing; if thou see me when I am taken from thee." I was thinking that the power that marked Elisha as he came back to move with the double portion of the Spirit was linked with the necessity of his seeing the ascending man in the figure.

AJG Quite so. And hence you can understand how deliberate Elisha would be that he was not diverted. He would be set upon keeping his eyes on Elijah lest he should lose that which was promised.

DJH And had he not had previous experience in following Elijah from place to place?

AJG Quite so, and that really leads us on to chapter 10, where the thought of following is a prominent thought, because we are now in the section of the gospel which is taking up the truth collectively, and the Lord introduces the idea of a flock, just one flock, indeed he stresses it in the verse where we started reading, where He says, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd." So that we are now in the collective position, and it is a universal position, involving all the saints. Jew and Gentile alike, just one flock, viewed as in movement as hearing the shepherd's voice, and following.

EJH The collective position is maintained, would you say, through the individual position being maintained in hearing His voice each one individually.

AJG Yes, I think so.

HDT So that there is no need to attempt to erect another fold. The saints are going to be held together on the principle of a flock.

AJG Quite so.

EJH Have not divisions come into the public position because other voices have been listened to instead of this one voice that would set every individual together in one company?

AJG Yes, exactly. The thought, of course, of sheep in John's gospel is that it is their nature to recognise the shepherd's voice and follow. It is not their propensity for straying which is Luke's and Matthew's presentation of sheep, but it is rather their nature to hear the shepherd's voice and follow.

WMcK In that sense, is the flock held together through their individual links with the Shepherd.

AJG Yes, I think so.

WMcK Every sheep is recognising the voice of the one Shepherd.

AJG That works out now in our recognising the universal ministry which the Lord gives by which the assembly universally is to be regulated, because this contemplates that we are in movement all the time we are here. But we are in movement as governed by the voice of the one Shepherd.

SJH Is that not exemplified in the Song of Songs? The individual side merging in the collective side.

AJG I was thinking of that before the meeting began, that verse in the Song of Songs, "If thou know not, thou fairest among women, Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock," chapter 1: 8. So that an enquirer was directed in that way to the footsteps of the flock.

THW Why does the Lord speak of it as giving? "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me; and I give them life eternal," John 20: 27, 28.

AJG I think it is the result of following. If we follow diligently the ministry which the Lord gives we find it leads us into life eternal more and more. We are maintained in freshness. There is no stagnancy, there is a fresh entrance more and more into the things which God has prepared for those that love Him.

GAL I suppose the experience of chapter 9 would lie behind our finding our place in the flock?

AJG Surely. But then we are in the flock as given to Him of the Father, we have to find our place in it.

GAL I thought that was very interesting, because in chapter 9 the man himself is credited with having gone outside; but in chapter 10 the Lord shows that He leads us out and that He brings us in.

AJG Quite so. And it is in connection with the process of extrication that we get the idea that He calls His own sheep by name, as though in the process of extrication from what is contrary to the truth the Lord has a personal interest in each one and takes personal account of the circumstances and exercises of each one, but once that one is led out, then he is put in the flock, he has got to merge with the flock and move with it.

ELM Would the process of extrication lie in what we have in chapter 6 largely? Do you think feeding upon His flesh and drinking His blood would work out in extricating us from the false position?

AJG I do not know whether that enters into it in any marked way more than any other things.

ELM I was only thinking how that would extricate us from the whole life of the flesh in chapter 6 and I wondered if in principle the application of that would be working in chapter 9 in delivering the man from the position in which he was.

AJG Well, it is so, surely, only I did not want the idea to be conveyed that chapter 6 was simply a matter of extrication, because it is really essential for us all, even though we may have had the privilege of being brought up in the truth, and in that sense not be in anything from which we need to be extricated, but we have to take up the exercises of chapter 6 just the same.

ALO What would be the thought in the Song of Songs of his feeding his flock among the lilies?

AJG I suppose they are suitable conditions for the feeding. The lilies may suggest purity of affection.

DMcI Why does the Lord introduce the love of the Father and the laying down of His life here?

AJG It shows how all this we are speaking of is in the Father's purpose, and therefore Christ draws forth the Father's love in a peculiar way, that He takes this way of laying down His life in order that He might take it again, to give effect to it.

ECM Is not that where we come in; in the Lord taking His life again?

AJG I think it is important to see that, "I lay down my life that I may take it again." It is the life that is beyond death that is in the Father's purpose, and the Lord brings it in in Himself.

HDT Is not love induced in us by this term, "lays down his life for the sheep"? (verse 11) - "Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us," 1 John 3: 16. Is it not calculated to affect every one of us? Not only the Father's love to Christ but what is induced in the heart of the believer that recognises the way the Lord has taken for him?

AJG And to see that it is all connected with eternal purpose, so that the Lord says, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself." It is the dignified glorious movements of One of the Godhead come in to give effect in this way to all that the Father has in His heart.

TJG Would the appeal of love be seen peculiarly in this figure used of the Lord's death? Are there not two main figures used as to the Lord's dying - lifted up and laying down in John's gospel, and the laying down is an appeal to love; the lifting up in John 12 is to draw all to Him?

AJG Well, quite so, and He says, "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth" (referring to the cross) "will draw all to me." John 12: 32. Notwithstanding the outward reproach and opprobrium of the cross He is so attractive that He draws all to Himself, all that are in the Father's purpose.

FWK Would an extricated company be seen in Acts 1, the Lord assembling with them and speaking of the promise of the Father, and then the coming of the Holy Spirit in chapter 2?

AJG Yes, I think so. But I think this passage in chapter 10 shows that our position, as following the shepherd's voice, has a certain bearing on the profession around us, it exposes it. So that we read that "the feast of the dedication was celebrating at Jerusalem," that is, it was cold formalism "and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in the porch of Solomon." The movements of Jesus had a certain exposing and discriminating effect, distinguishing between what was of God and what was not. And so "the Jews therefore surrounded him" and He says, "I told you, and ye do not believe. The works which I do in my Father's name, there bear witness concerning me: but ye do not believe, for ye are not of my sheep, as I told you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand." So that those whom the Father has given to Christ are marked out from the cold formalism around them by the fact that they are in life, they never perish, they go right through in life.

AB Are the saints in that sense introduced into that which is most precious in the presence of the hatred of Christ?

AJG I think so. I think it is important to see as apostasy increases, that God intends we should be an exposure of what is all around in the fact that we are in the enjoyment of life, that we do not perish but go right through in life to the end.

EJH And the Lord speaks of very great opposition to these precious thoughts, the thieves and the robbers and the wolves and those who serve for wages. All these things are set in a hostile scene, are they not?

AJG There were those who were saying, "He has a demon," there were those who were saying as much as that, "He has a demon and raves." But against those conditions no one can deny the power of life, and the secret of our going through in life is that we have an ear that is attentive to the shepherd's voice, that what the Lord is saying to the assembly at any time we are following up, it is bound to lead into life eternal, so that we never perish, we do not drop out.

GAL Is the position being more clearly defined as the Lord's ministry proceeds? Chapter 8 is a sort of turning point when they rejected the ministry of Christ and placed themselves under the law. He then shows them to be lost and says ye are of your father the devil, from that point it seems there is no temporising of that any more, but the blessed position of the truth that the Lord is opening up and relationships with the Father are developed over against all that, are they not?

AJG Yes, they are, and it is remarkable, according to the New Translation, there is a double expression in that 8th chapter, the Lord says to some, "Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your *sin*" (verse 21), and then He says, "Ye shall die in your *sins*," verse 24. That is to say, there is the dreadful sin of refusing the ministry which God gives, and then those who do that, die in their sins as well.

AB Would this violence of the enemy only bring out the greatness of the joys into which we are introduced as having eternal life, and the great security of the position in that such never perish and they can never be taken out of His hands, the Lord's hands, nor the Father's hands?

AJG Well, it is a most blessed position. The way the Lord brings Himself in and then the Father. It reminds us of the way Paul addresses the Thessalonians "*in* God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thessalonians 1: 1.

ELM Do you find the same line of thought in 2 Timothy with these wicked men, Jannes and Jambres were exposed by the power of life in evidence in the saints.

AJG Exactly. I think in the presence of the pretensions of formal religion it is a very important matter that we should see that we are intended to fill this position of exposing all that is formal and false by the simple fact that we are going on in life and we are maintained in it just as we hear the shepherd's voice. There is only one voice for the whole flock.

WMcK Is the thought of the voice a very personal matter? It is not simply what is said, but it is the matter of the voice. Is it personal in that way?

AJG It is, quite so. But it is the voice now, not for each individual sheep but one voice for the whole flock, one flock, one shepherd.

AB Are you emphasising that it involves movement; the recognition of the Lord's leadership amongst His people?

AJG Yes, exactly, that the leadership which the Lord gives among His people as the truth is followed up involves movement so there is no stagnation.

GM Does it suggest that this following is the result, not of commandment, but of affection and the attractiveness of the voice?

AJG That enters into it. I think that is a marked feature of this chapter, the shepherd's personal love for the sheep and the sheep's knowledge of the shepherd.

ERH Would the one voice suggest that it is likely we should be occupied universally with certain features of the truth at certain times?

AJG Yes, quite so. From one point of view, it is presented as the Spirit's voice, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies," Revelation 2: 7. But from this point of view it is the shepherd's voice. He is in charge of the whole flock.

JFP "The words of the wise are as goads, and the collection of them as nails fastened in," Ecclesiastes 12: 11. They are given from one shepherd?

AJG Yes, given from one shepherd; they are goads, that is, they incite to movement.

CJHD Would the sheep be seen in Solomon's porch in Acts 5, where it says, "They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch" (verse 12) and that is the same passage to which you referred this morning as to the words of this life.

AJG Yes. But here it says, "Jesus walked in the temple in the porch of Solomon." In Acts 5 it says "they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch" (Acts 5: 12) which is usually thought to refer to the porch of judgment, so that judgment had just been executed on Ananias and Sapphira and the brethren were all there with one accord, there was not a dissentient note, they were thoroughly committed to the judgment that had been executed.

HDT They were carried by what had been done.

AJG They were carried by what had been done, no one was questioning it. But here the Lord was walking in Solomon's porch, the movements of the Lord, which are discerned in the ministry which He gives, have this discriminating or judging effect, exposing all that is just formal and bringing into relief what is living.

TJG Are we right in saying that the feast of dedication was not only formal but false and an attempt on the part of man to introduce evidences of life.

AJG I suppose so, but the Spirit of God says it was winter, it was cold and dead.

TJG As far as I can see, there is nothing in Scripture to show that this feast of dedication was a divinely inaugurated one, though abused. Was it not an

introduction by man as an attempt to show evidences of life?

AJG I am not sure whether I could say as to that or not, but it is quite clear that whatever it was, it was just being carried on formally as is the case with all the feasts in John's gospel.

FGH It is the emphatic "*I*." "I give to them life eternal" suggests that this is assured to Christ's sheep.

AJG Yes, I think so, and it is contemplated that we follow.

HDT Is not that over against the defencelessness of the position publicly?

AJG I think it is.

HDT There could not be anything much more defenceless than a flock, and if each sheep is given eternal life they are lifted into an invulnerable position.

AJG Quite so, then the Lord assures us of that in saying, "No one can seize them out of my hand, my Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father."

MR Is not the difference there instructive, that the Lord in speaking of Himself uses a future tense? "No one *shall* seize" and in speaking of the Father says, "No one is *able*." One had noticed the same thoughts in the end of Romans 8 in connection with the love of Christ and the love of God. In the one case it is, "Who *shall* separate us from the love of Christ" (verse 35) and in the other it is, "No one is *able* to separate us from the love of God," verse 39.

AJG That is interesting, on the one hand the Lord says they shall not do it; on the other hand they cannot do it.

AB Is it protection against every contingency that might arise?

AJG Yes it is, but before we close we ought to pass on to chapter 17 because I suppose what the Lord says in verse 3, "This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," places it on a very exalted level. The Lord asks that He should be glorified. He says, "as thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal. And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There can be nothing greater than really to know God, and then to know the blessed Man who is the perfect answer in manhood to God. All that God looks for in Man is found in Jesus Christ, and we are to know both, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

HDT Whilst the blessedness of that runs on into eternity itself, is it not a fact that in this setting it is in relation to those who have been left in the world and

not taken out of it?

AJG I think so. I think it is well to see that, that the chapter in the main contemplates the disciples, and then ourselves, being left here in a position of testimony and in view of setting us up in that position we are to have the eternal life, to know the only true God, which is, as has often been said, deliverance from idolatry, so that God Himself becomes our object, and to know Jesus Christ whom He has sent, which as has been said, is deliverance from lawlessness. And those two things preserve us so that we are in the position of testimony without being overcome. But what impresses one is that while that is the setting of it, yet the essential thing is so great and eternal, that we can know God and know Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

FW To "glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me," Jeremiah 9: 24.

AJG Quite so.

GAL Is not the fulness of the economy really spelt out in this wonderful chapter: first the Son glorified of the Father, but not that He may demand the world and make His foes His footstool, but to open up all the marvellous thoughts of the Father in divine love and purpose, and then He is the last Adam in verse 2 and He is the life-giving Spirit, which brings us into the blessedness of relationship in the knowledge of God and Christ. It is a wonderful opening up of the truth, is it not? The glory of our dispensation down here.

AJG Well, it is, and leads on to the most wonderful things in the end of the chapter, as we know, which we cannot touch on now, but this seems to me to be very wonderful, both in its immediate setting, that it is a great preservative, so that we may be here in the testimony as not overcome by the conditions that are around us, but then there is more than that in it, because when the position of testimony has ceased we shall still have this knowledge in all its blessedness.

GAL So it is a question of knowing God as Christ knew Him as Man.

AJG Quite so.

ECM It says of the Thessalonians that they "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens." Would that feature be seen with the Thessalonians?

AJG Yes, they turned to God from idols.

DMcI You referred earlier to Paul at the end of his life speaking of knowing, "That I may know," Philippians 4: 12. Does it not suggest that this is intended

to go on continuously. This knowledge, it is a growing thing, is it not?

AJG Yes, I would think that. The Lord says this *is* the eternal life. He was to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him, and this is, He says, the eternal life, this is it; so that the very fact that it is called the eternal life shows it goes on eternally although in eternity, of course, the expression 'eternal' loses its force. It is evidently something to be known now in a contrary scene.

AB Would it be the great triumph of God in that way that God is known in all His blessedness and this blessed Man in whom perfection in manhood is known too.

AJG I think so. And, of course, we shall be brought into accord with Him as having His Spirit, but this is what is open to us to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

TJG Would you say a word as to that expression that seems to be linked on with the thought of eternal life: "The only true God" (verse 3) and then in 1 John 5: 20 "The true God"?

AJG I think it is, because what is immediately in view is the position in testimony here. So that there are many false gods, "gods many" it says. Many things or persons that would claim the allegiance of the hearts of men, but the Lord says, "that they should know thee, the only *true* God" - the only One entitled to command the affections of the creature.

HDT May I ask why this truth is conveyed to us in the form of a prayer?

AJG I think that is very wonderful, because you can understand that the Lord in speaking to the disciples was somewhat limited. He says in chapter 16, "I have yet many things to say to you but ye cannot bear them now," verse 12. But when you find the Lord speaking to the Father He is entirely unrestricted. Speaking reverently, He can tell out His full heart and speak of all the Father's thoughts, without the *slightest* limitation imposed by the weakness of the disciples, and that is what makes this chapter so unique.

HDT I wondered whether you had the same principle in Paul, that really the cream of his ministry is presented in the prayers in Ephesians and whether it involved communion on our part if we are to come into the gain of what the truth suggests to us.

AJG I am sure that is right.

GAL I suppose the distinction here would be, would it not, that the language which the blessed Lord uses, shows that they are speaking on equality, divine

Persons are speaking on equality here.

AJG I think so.

HDT You mean, there is no bowing of the knees here?

AJG Quite so, they are on an equality. That is what makes it so wonderful and so precious, there is no limitation at all. There would be a certain limitation when the Lord spoke, to the disciples because of their lack of ability but here there is no limitation, and there is perfect equality and the most absolute accord of mind and thought between the Father and the Son. So we get divine thoughts in their purity and greatness in this chapter.

TJG And the Holy Spirit recording it provides an incentive to spirituality to look into it adoringly, into this matter, unlimited matter.

AJG I think so.

HFR The Lord quotes the passage you are referring to, "I and the Father are one," John 12: 30. Does not there seem to be a development of that?

AJG Quite so.

GM Is there evidence of that liberty in the fact that the true God is mentioned before Jesus Christ?

AJG But does not that appeal to you as being in any sense morally right, I mean for us as creatures, it is right that we should know God and that He should come first, and then to know Jesus Christ is that you apprehend a Man in whom all that is right in Man God-ward is found, so that we have to know God first, and we have to know the Man in whom there is the answer to God.

GM I suppose in Revelation, would it not be right to say, that we take account of the Person, the glorious Person who has come into manhood first? (See end of verse 5 and verse 6 of chapter 1, and chapter 5: 9, 10).

AJG But then we take account of Him as Mediator, the One in whom God is known; I think we have to learn God first, then the answer to that in a Man.

GAL I think that is very important. There is no revelation of Jesus Christ yet. When He comes the second time He will be revealed; but He came to reveal God.

AJG Quite so.

FGP It seems to me that the second verse of John 17 would impress us with the various thoughts in the heart of the Lord Jesus, "That as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal."

AJG Yes, and the hour had come for it too. He says, "Father, the hour is come" and that shows how important this present period of the Spirit's presence is, the hour has come for all this, that eternal life should be known, the power of it should be seen in the saints here in testimony.

EJH And heaven is impressed upon them because the Lord lifted up His eyes to heaven to say all these things.

AJG Yes, exactly.

HDT Would you say a word on "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee"?

AJG I think it is very touching that if the Lord asks to be glorified it is solely that He may glorify the Father; that is to put its impress on us too that the Lord has come in as Man with, I think we may say, the sole object of glorifying God. We are to take on that idea. It says in regard of those who minister in Peter's epistle, that "God in all things may be glorified" even in the smallest things, that God in all things may be glorified, and we learn that as we take account of Christ in His movements.

HDT The acme of unselfishness is it not?

AJG It is indeed, yet you feel it is morally right, everything now is established on a morally right basis.

ETERNAL LIFE (3)

1 John 1: 1 - 10; 1 John 2: 12 - 28

AJG We are seeking to get help together on the matter of *eternal life*. We had it before us yesterday from John's gospel, and particularly noted the importance of active faith on our part - the thought of believing is constantly brought in in relation to eternal life. So that the end of the gospel says that John recorded the signs that he did record, in order that we might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *believing* we might have life in his name," John 20: 31. So that eternal life includes, as has been said, a sphere of affections and relationships and interests which are all involved in the name of "the Christ the Son of God" and lie outside this scene, though to be known while we are in it and to be entered upon in the Spirit, and eternal life was what was in the mind of God when He gave His only-begotten Son.

But now, when we come to the epistle, John tells us that he writes his epistle in order that we may know that we have eternal life, not simply have it before us as an idea, but prove the reality of it, because Christianity is nothing if it is not life, known in power. The importance of that becomes more and more evident as departure from the truth marks the public position, that the truth is supported in life, not by the maintenance of correct doctrine, though that is important in its place, but it is supported in life. Hence the writer of the epistle, John, is stressing now the reality of things in the saints; indeed in chapter 2 (the part we did not read) he says, "which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines."

So that he begins by reverting to "that which was from the beginning," and he maintains that all through his epistle, the importance of our learning what was from the beginning and having our thoughts governed by it, not allowing any departure from it or addition to it, but understanding that Christianity in its true features was set out in the beginning, that is in Christ as Man here, and that is to give its character to it. So that he speaks of the "Word of life," referring to what came under the notice of the apostles in the pathway of Jesus here - "The word of life" - that is a living expression in a Man of what life is according to God, and he says, "We have seen and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us."

GAL Does it not, therefore, greatly help to see set forth in Jesus in all His relationships down here in manhood, just exactly that kind of life that was in the mind of God for us from eternity?

AJG Yes, I think so. Not that eternal life covers all the activities of the Lord as Man here, because of course there is the way He filled out the details of ordinary human life in perfection as typified in the manna, and there is what He was in public testimony before men, meeting hostility and so on, but eternal life was really the spring, so to speak, of His movements.

GAL I was thinking of what the word says, "and we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us."

AJG Yes, quite so, they could take account of it, that all His springs, you might say, were in the Father, and His life was lived in relation to the Father.

EJH Is it the thought of what was seen there substantially in Christ? So that it says, "*that which* was from the beginning."

AJG Yes. I think that is most important, it is not quite the presentation of the Lord in His Person (though of course that is involved), but rather the substantiality of what was there, it was the "Word of life." The gospel presents Him as the Word, the One in whom personally the mind of God is conveyed to us, but the epistle presents Him as "the Word of life," the One in whom life in its substantiality and characteristics were set out.

HDT What difference would there be between this and the statement of the apostle, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father"? That is more the personal side, I know, but would you draw a distinction for us between the two sides?

AJG I do not know that one can say much in the way of drawing a distinction. I think we can see that "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father" (John 1: 14) is stressing what is unique and beautiful in the sense of a relationship of love, and it was unique to Him, too, "A glory as of an only-begotten with a father." At the same time, I think that all enters into this thought of the "Word of life." It was with the Father, that is to say, as I understand it, it was the character of the life that was lived in relation to the Father.

HDT So that that in itself gave rise to all the Lord's activities in the testimony and His movements amongst men, the spring of it all was, may we say reverently, His life with the Father.

AJG That is what I thought. So that there is a verse at the end of one of the later chapters in Luke's gospel that by day He was teaching in the temple and by night he went out and was abroad on the mount of Olives, as though suggesting that the life of the Lord here was made up of those two things -

the public position of testimony amongst men on the one hand, but then, on the other, that which gave it its character and provided its support was what it was with the Father in secret.

GAL Must that not always be the case in any service or ministry? Is not what lies behind in our relationships with God much more important in a certain sense than the ministry itself, because if that is missing the ministry is worthless?

AJG Exactly. Then it is not given to all to minister, that is a matter of sovereignty, but it is given to all to have part in life.

WMcK Does the epistle, in that sense, refer us back to the gospel and underlie the importance of our contemplation of Christ as seen in the gospels?

AJG Yes, I am sure it does. So that in the passage we read in chapter 2 the fathers are addressed as having known Him that is from the beginning, and that being characteristic of them, the apostle did not find it necessary to say any more to them, save what he says to all the saints, "and now, children, abide in him."

ECM Does the thought of full maturity connect with the fathers and would it involve our being established in the full revelation of God?

AJG Yes, I think so, but maturity which consists in this thought that they have seen and know Him that is from the beginning. They kept Christ before their hearts as the standard of Christianity and they were not prepared to allow any deviation from it.

ECM So that we need to have an apprehension of Christ as He is presented objectively in the gospels?

AJG Yes, exactly.

WHL What does "from the beginning" mean? It is "in the beginning" in the first verse of John's gospel.

AJG Yes, but this is not that. This is the beginning of Christianity, so that it begins with Christ as Man here. That is what is in mind, it is from the beginning. The whole point in the epistle is that, in the days in which the apostle was writing, there were many Antichrists and many who were bringing in what was false; hence the apostle insists that the saints must keep before them what was from the beginning, that is, what appeared in Christ as Man here as the expression and standard of Christianity according to God's thoughts.

HDT There is no advance on that, is there?

AJG There is no advance or development. The whole thing was there in perfection in Christ.

DMcI Is that the force of "has been manifested"?

AJG Yes, it was specially manifested to the twelve. They seem to have had a special place, and it is given to them through John to pass it on to us, so that he says, "our fellowship," referring to what was peculiar to the apostles, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son. Jesus Christ," verse 3.

DMcI But the intent is that we should come, in fellowship with them, into the gain of the manifestation, is it not?

AJG Yes, surely.

HDT Is it not a matter of what reaches us in this period of faith on the ground of testimony? But the actual manifestation was direct.

AJG It was. It was direct to the apostles and hence we have to see that John, as one of the twelve, has his place with us, and that we pay attention to what he says.

EJH Would it be only the apostles who could say, "our eyes" and "our hands"?

AJG I do not know whether it can be limited to the apostles, because I suppose Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene and others would have got some of these impressions as well; only the apostles were the divinely appointed ones to bear testimony to these things.

FVW Would the two in John 1 who left John and went and saw where the Lord dwelt and abode with him that day, would they have seen a little of eternal life?

AJG Yes, I expect so.

HDT But when it came to testimony, the stipulations were pretty stringent, at the end of Acts 1, as to the one who should fill the apostle's place. It was not anybody in that sense. Is there not something peculiarly special about the twelve and they had a distinctive part? We come into it on the ground of testimony.

GAL Is that not clearly seen by the Lord's own words at the end of John 15, speaking of the Holy Spirit coming from with the Father and His testimony and then it says, "Ye too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning"? That is the testimony we have here, is it not?

AJG Yes, it is. I think there is a verse in John 17 that makes it clear, that is what the Lord says in verse 8. He is speaking to the Father about His disciples

and He says, "the words" (divine communications) "which thou hast given me I have given them, and they have received them," John 17: 8. So the Lord was constantly receiving communications from His Father and He passed them on to the twelve. The twelve were in that privileged place that the communications that the Lord received from His Father He passed on to them, and you can understand the apostle saying, "our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ."

TJG Would that be involved in the thought of contemplation as over against the physical fact of hearing and seeing and touching? Contemplation seems to be something beyond what is physical.

AJG Well, it is, and would require opened eyes to see it, so that John says, "we have contemplated his glory," John 1: 14. What they saw was glorious in their eyes, morally glorious, and held their attention, but others would perhaps be in a position to see it, but yet did not see it.

GAL Yet the other was very important because it became the basis of the ministry of the twelve in the early part of Acts. They had been with the Lord, they had seen Him die and they had seen Him as raised from the dead, and they had received their commission from Him. All that gave authority to their ministry.

AJG Yes. So that while in the principle of it, this word of life was before their eyes throughout the Lord's public testimony here, I suppose what they apprehended of Christ during the forty days after His resurrection would particularly set forth this side of the truth, because they would see in Jesus a Man actually on earth coming in and going out amongst them, and yet entirely apart from the world. The world did not see Him at all; nor did He touch the things of the world or have any part in testimony in the world even. They saw Him moving in and out in an out-of-the-world heavenly condition of things, yet moving in and out amongst them on the earth as risen from the dead. His position during those forty days particularly sets out the idea of eternal life, although the character of it was there in Him during His course here.

BGH Would that be covered by the expression, "our hands have handled"? I am thinking of the Lord's words, "handle me and see."

AJG Yes, that is the only instance we have recorded of His being handled.

BGH So that it is what is beyond death in that sense, is it not?

AJG Yes, in the spirit of it or the essence of it. The Lord's life was lived with the Father.

WMcK Does the matter of handling the Lord after His resurrection stress the idea of substantiality?

AJG It does exactly. I believe it is mentioned for that very purpose to show that these things were real, and that is what we have to be brought to, the reality of Christianity, so that we do not content ourselves with merely having a certain understanding of the truth, but we are to challenge ourselves as to how far we are in accord with it.

PAR Would holding Him by the feet have the same thought as substantiality?

AJG Yes, I suppose so, quite so. So the Lord was stressing that He was a real Man on earth, moving about on earth, a real Man, "a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me have," Luke 24: 39. It is to emphasise the reality of the thing, that it is not just a theory or something mystical, but it is a real thing that can be known here on earth in men.

EJH Is the substantiality seen in Peter and John when Peter can say, "What I have, this give I to thee"? The substance that was with him was on the line of giving in regard of God's thoughts.

AJG Well, yes, and then we read of the shadow of Peter, which would emphasise the idea of substance behind the shadow.

AAG Peter had said, "Look on us."

AJG I was thinking of that. You get the idea there too, perhaps more in that and in the shadow of Peter than in "what I have." But at the end of the Acts you have Paul saying, "such as I am"; there you have the idea of substance, too.

HDT The napkins taken from his body, too. Am I to understand that what you are stressing is the substantiality of what came out in Christ personally? It is to come out in us and we are to be affected by it. Is that what you have in mind in these Scriptures?

AJG Yes, exactly, because it is the standard.

HDT There is no addition to it.

AJG So that two or three times we come back to, "that which was from the beginning." As we have in chapter 2: 24, "as for you" (this was addressed to little children) "let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you if what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you." It is what was at the beginning of Christianity first as set out in Christ before the eyes of the apostles, and then as ministered by the apostles to those who believed.

GAL That makes the contemplation of Christ a very, very important matter in relation to life, does it not?

AJG It does indeed, and the final word of the apostle at the end of chapter 2 is to *all*, whether fathers, young men or little children, "and now, children, abide in him," verse 28. As though that is the great essential.

FWK The thought of seeing and hearing is also introduced in connection with the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Would that be in line with what John says here, "seeing and hearing"?

AJG Yes. You mean that people could see and hear certain things in the saints? Quite so.

MHT In view of what you have just said as to handling the Lord, why does He say to Mary of Magdala, "touch me not"?

AJG I think because Mary was desirous of having the Lord back again in the relations in which she had known Him before He died, so she says, "My teacher," as though she wants to have the Lord for herself. But the Lord as much as said that she had got to learn to identify herself with Him in a new position and in a new circle, so He says, "Go to my brethren."

HDT The eternal life is something that is enjoyed and gives impulse while we are here, whereas that position was the ascending position that the Lord was taking and the emphasis would hardly be the same, would it?

AJG No, the Lord was seeking to lead her on to heavenly ground, do you mean?

HDT So that as you were saying yesterday, whilst life is the same, the thought of eternal life is that it is enjoyed in the scene where death is. Where there is no death the force of eternal life somewhat diminishes, although the life remains the same.

PAR What is the thought of "yet"? "I have not *yet* ascended to my Father."

AJG Well, I suppose that the Lord had not as yet reached finality. He wanted to open out the full privilege of Christianity in the heavenly relationships with His Father and their Father, and His God and their God, and He says, "I have not yet ascended" (John 20: 17), as though to indicate to Mary Magdalene that there was something more that she was to be brought into.

PAR Would it involve that we might touch then?

AJG I would think so.

JGW It would help if you would please open out a little more how we come into it. We can see that the apostles learned from the Lord as expressing this life, but by what means do we come into the good of it? Is it by the Spirit or through the apostles' writings?

AJG It must be by the Spirit, and I think it is by adhering closely to the apostolic teaching. So it says in Acts 2: 42, "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." They would not go back to Judaism on the one hand nor would they embrace any other teaching than the apostles' teaching. The apostles give the authoritative setting out of Christianity,

and that is the crying sin of Christendom that they have departed from the apostles and, of course, from the Spirit.

HGH Is that what is involved in "that ye may have fellowship with us"?

AJG Yes, that is it.

JFP So that the "we" of verse 2 is the twelve. "We have seen and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us." Is there any connection with the distinctive place the twelve have in the foundations of the city?

AJG I think there would be, but the whole system is built up on apostolic testimony, and that is the great sin of the religious systems around us that they do not recognise that. They admit as a principle that there is such a thing as development and further light and the accommodation of Christianity to present-day conditions and so on, whereas John is combating all that and is insisting that that which was from the beginning remains as the standard of Christianity.

TJG And his warning is in the second epistle as to that matter.

AJG Yes.

JFP Without the recognition of that the distinctive place of Paul cannot be taken account of rightly.

AJG No, quite so. He comes in as giving a special character to the dispensation but, of course, he being an apostle too, he has to be given his place, and a very special place.

EJH Would it be right to say, therefore, that the continuity and substantiality of what was seen in the apostles is to continue until the coming of the Lord, and in such persons as ourselves it is possible in the Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so. So that the true features of fathers according to John is that they "know him that is from the beginning."

DJH Do you mind saying a word as to the thought of writing here in connection with joy as distinct from the speaking of the Lord in John 15, "I have spoken these things to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full." Here it is a matter of writing.

AJG I suppose writing has in mind that the dispensation was to continue for a time and that John, who was probably the last of the apostles to go to be with Christ, was shortly to be removed, so that writing places things on record in view of the dispensation continuing.

GAL Is not that very important, that the writing is really the voice of the Holy Spirit as completing the testimony?

AJG Exactly, yes.

HDT So that the saints have always something substantial to refer back to as a standard.

AJG Quite so. So that we have the gospels of Matthew and John written by apostles, and Mark and Luke by other vessels who were not apostles, but taken up by the Spirit to give a complete presentation of Christ as Man here, so that they can be studied to understand Christianity in its proper features.

HFR Is it remarkable that John is selected to open up this matter of eternal life, one who is presented as so near to the Lord?

AJG Quite so, and also one as to whom the Lord says, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21: 23) suggesting that the line of things that John stands for will continue till the Lord comes, and that is life, the testimony known in life.

GAL Then Peter has his commission to the circumcision and Paul to the uncircumcision, but John has a ministry for the whole of the family of God.

AJG Yes, exactly.

HDT And comes in when breakdown has come into the public position. Does not that give peculiar value to his writings?

AJG I think it does. It is a very important thing to realise that no one can deny the power of life. Therefore, if there is just one person who is really in the power of Christianity, the thing is maintained in testimony here.

ECM Would that not fortify us against what is connected with the last hour in connection with Antichrist?

AJG Yes, it would.

DMcI Can we have a word as to why he introduces the thought of light? - "God is light."

AJG I think that is very important that the apostle should so early introduce the moral element, and he brings it in not as a mere incident in teaching, but as a definite message. "This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you, that God is *light*, and in him is no darkness at all," verse 5. So that he is insisting on the moral element as the first characteristic you might say of Christianity.

HDT Whilst it is very exercising it is also very assuring, is it not?

AJG Well, it is - "no darkness at all"!

HDT Do you not think in that sense it is one of the characteristics of life that God is known in that character, as being without possibility of change or alteration of any kind? Does not that introduce the feature of stability into the heart of the believer?

AJG It does, and then we have in Christ One who as Man is completely in accord with it, so that He could say He was altogether what He said to them. That is a great comfort too that not only is God known as One in whom there is no darkness at all, but Jesus is known as in every way in keeping with that, so it is set out in manhood.

FW The way it is introduced at the beginning of the gospel would be helpful, would it not, as to the light?

AJG Yes. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men," John 1: 4. He came into the world as the true light, so that the first thing that is set out in Him is the idea of life and that is light to men.

FWT Is the moral instruction carried down to verse 2 of chapter 2?

AJG I think it is. That is, there is this message brought in that "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." Then the verses that follow, including verses 1 and 2 of chapter 2, bring in how we might face up to that and be in practical accord with it, even though we do not deceive ourselves and say we have no sin or have not sinned, but there is the provision for that.

FWT I was wondering if that was the moral basis for being able to seize on the thought of eternal life?

AJG I think it is, and I do not think there is anything more important to stress at the present time than that there must be a moral basis for all these things. Our profession is worthless if it has not got a moral basis for it, and if it is not

marked by moral features that are according to God. We often find breakdown on the moral line among the saints and it discredits the testimony.

HGH Is that what is involved in verse 6, "If we say ... "?

AJG Yes. "If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practise the truth," verse 6. So that John is in that sense uncompromising; he is like God Himself. He does not mix things or adulterate them in any way.

DMcI So that this follows on the line you were bringing before us yesterday that this is an intensely personal matter now, this moral question. Whilst it is fellowship, yet if we are to be in the enjoyment of it, it is an individual matter, is it not?

AJG We must have our individual contacts with God maintained and individual exercise to learn from Christ and abide in Him, because I suppose our greatest danger is to come under the influence of the world that is around us to some extent. The world is constantly lowering its standards, but Christianity is maintained according to the standard of what was from the beginning.

GAL I take it this statement "God is light" involves the revelation of Himself so that that becomes the basis of our walk together in fellowship.

AJG Surely. It is not simply the light as exposing, the light, you might say incidentally, does expose, but it is the revelation of God.

HDT Then in the discoveries that we make, in the exposure, there is absolute provision made that communion may be maintained in spite of what we are.

AJG Exactly.

TJG So that "do not practise the truth" is that there is what is hostile to life and what is not in accordance with the revelation of God?

AJG Yes. God has come out revealed in His nature in love, and love that has taken account of the condition in which we were, the guilt under which we lay, and the sinful condition in which we were, involved, and love has met it according to divine holiness and righteousness. All that enters into the light that shines and by which we are to be formed, so that under the influence of love we learn to judge evil as God judges it and find in Christ and the Spirit the power to come into accord with the light.

HFR Every element of darkness militates against the enjoyment of eternal life, they cannot go on together. "In him is no darkness at all."

AJG Quite so.

WHL John 3 says, "he that practises the truth comes to the light." Is that a characteristic idea?

AJG It is; I was thinking of that scripture. Then it says that "Every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light that his works may not be shown as they are" (John 3: 20), and "he that believes not has been already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil," verse 19. The light that has come into the world makes it possible for us to judge the evil and come into accord with God in regard of it, and yet not ourselves come into condemnation. So that if we go on with evil we expose ourselves by the very fact of doing so.

RGB So does the fellowship with one another referred to in verse 7 become in that way a real and transparent matter?

AJG It does.

GAL Then would you say that the more we can appreciate the fact that God is come into the light and all His nature expressed in Jesus, the more we feel the need of the cleansing power of the blood that we might be in accord with that light?

AJG Yes, I am sure of that.

HDT We are not to be discouraged either, because it says, "the darkness is passing" - it does not say it is gone altogether - "the true light now shines." There is nothing more to come by way of light in that sense, but when it comes to the elimination of the darkness, that may be a process that is still going on with us all.

AJG Well, perhaps so.

FGH What is your distinction between the fellowship in verse 6 and the fellowship in verse 7? Verse 6 speaks of fellowship "with him" and verse 7 fellowship "with one another."

AJG Well, the first is "if we say," if we take that ground, there is no reason why we should not have fellowship with Him. Of course we can go on in communion with the Lord, but if we take that ground and say that we do, our course must bear witness to it. But as we walk in the light that becomes a basis of fellowship with one another. Obviously if I walk in darkness and you are walking in the light; there is no basis of fellowship between us, but both walking in the light there is a basis for fellowship.

JGW What is involved in that fellowship? We often speak of fellowship, but I am wondering whether what is written to the intent that our joy may be in full would be a governing factor of the fellowship. Would you agree with that?

AJG Joy is not exactly our object; joy is the effect as we walk in the light. "These things write I unto you that your joy may be full"; it makes it attractive. To have joy is not exactly our object, but as we walk in the light and enjoy the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Christ, we also enjoy fellowship with one another. The idea of fellowship is just that we have part together in common interests and joys.

JGW I am wondering, in suggesting the governing factor, whether we often put the joy as a result of going on as we say in fellowship, probably on social lines, but is it not on a higher plane than that?

AJG Oh, yes. There is no thought of going on together on social lines here, that is introducing an element of corruption.

ESB Would you distinguish for us between the light and the truth? It says of Demetrius he had witness borne to him by the truth.

AJG Well, I do not know that there is a great deal of difference. Light is what makes the truth known. God is in the light and God is light, and the truth is really the truth as to what God is. So that there is not a great deal of difference. The light is what makes the truth known, but then the truth becomes our bond in the world where the truth has been departed from.

GAL That was never more important than today.

AJG No, never. I think in John's writings the truth is the bond whereas in Paul's writings the testimony is the bond. It is very much the same idea.

EJH Have you the same principle in 2 Timothy 2 in regard to the fellowship with Him and with one another? But if we move according to the truth and separate from iniquity, then we can "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart."

AJG Yes, you mean the truth becomes the bond in that way.

EJH First with the Lord and then with one another.

AJG Quite so.

BGH Does this question of fellowship with Him really touch on what we were speaking of yesterday as to our personal links with divine Persons?

AJG Well, it does, and I think if we go away from these meetings with a sense of the importance of the cultivation and maintenance of those links, the

meetings will not be in vain, because this epistle is stressing the reality and the substantiality of Christianity and stressing that the standard must be maintained according to what was from the beginning.

FWK Why does the writer bring in at once, "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin," as having referred to the fellowship?

AJG Are you not thankful for that every day? We have to do with God every day in the sense of that, and very thankful for it, too.

TJG How do you understand the thought of cleansing by blood in this connection?

AJG Well, it is the cleansing that is made good in us by the Spirit as we apprehend freshly the value of that blood in the sight of God. It justifies too, death having come in. The man that sinned has been ended in death and you are very thankful that the value of that abides before God.

GAL The witness to the abiding efficacy of the work of Christ. We need to have that.

AJG Yes. It is the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, such an One as that!

CJD Is the moral line of what we practise to be a fixed matter with us? According to the last chapter of Revelation, "Let him that does unrighteously do unrighteously still; and let the filthy make himself filthy still; and let him that is righteous practise righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." Is that at the close of the days to be a fixed matter with us?

AJG It is indeed, because there is a certain feature of what is judicial operating in Christendom now, so that the filthy is filthy still. Then there is a word to encourage believers not to give up at the end, but whatever may be the influences around us, to see that we maintain divine standards in our souls and "he that is holy, let him be sanctified still," Revelation 22: 11.

ADT Does walking in the light involve the maintenance of the dignity of the fellowship? According to 1 Corinthians 1, "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

AJG Well, it would. It is the dignity of the fellowship, as you say. The fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we maintain the true dignity of it.

HDT So that unless our souls are maintained in the abiding efficacy of the work of Christ and that we are taken up in relation to another man out of death we may almost fear to face the light as it is shining in these chapters.

AJG Quite so; but then the second verse of chapter 3 says that "Jesus Christ ... is the propitiation for our sins." So that it is not simply a question of the abiding efficacy of His death, but He personally is there before God all the time in the value of His death.

AWP Is the light provision for the day in which we find ourselves? Not only to light the way - it does, in view of the walk - but to light up all that is available provisionally in regard to that walk, and you apprehend all the efficacy and all that has been accomplished and it is all applied in regard of the light illuminating the path that we tread.

AJG You are speaking about the light as illuminating our path; but it is more than that, it is the light of God Himself.

AWP So that the full value of all that God has set forth in Christ both in regard to the work and in regard to the end of the work is, for us, it is lit up for us.

AJG Yes, I think so. God has in mind that we should be thoroughly at home in the knowledge of Himself and be wholly pleasing to Him as walking before Him, and He is able to bring that to pass. The blood of Christ remains as an abiding basis on which He can operate by the Spirit in our souls and form us according to Christ.

WMcK Would you say that the passage in Ephesians 4 might help? Verse 17 says, "this I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye should no longer walk as the rest of the nations walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in understanding, estranged from the life of God by reason of the ignorance which is in them, by reason of the hardness of their hearts." What link is there, if any, between the life of God and the thought of eternal life?

AJG I think there is a link. "Estranged from the life of God," a remarkable expression that obviously does not refer to essential Deity, but there is the life of God, the interests that God lives in, if one might say so reverently, and that we are to be brought to have part in those interests. So it seems to me that the opposite to being "estranged from the life of God" is illustrated in a man like Enoch, who walked with God.

THW Is the thought of confession to help us to appreciate that which is available to us.

AJG Yes, surely. If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins. We must confess them, because as we confess them before God we morally repudiate them. We acknowledge their true character in the sight of God and in doing so we repudiate them.

HDT Would the word 'communion' which we do not often use these days, cover pretty much what we are speaking of now? I was thinking of all we have before us, we do not speak much of that these days and wondered whether it was a most important thing, it was part of the enjoyment, you might say, of eternal life. Communion with divine Persons as outside what belongs to us here is our ordinary circumstances.

AJG I think so; I believe that is important, because there is a good deal of rush nowadays and we have many privileges of being together, but there is just the danger perhaps that in those conditions communion may be little known by us, in the real power of it.

GAL But there is no growth without it, surely.

AJG There is no growth without it. One is often challenged that one may know a good deal about speaking to the Lord, and speaking to the Father, and speaking to the Spirit, and it is often a question in my mind as to how much I know of the Lord speaking to me, and the Spirit speaking to me. That is what one would like to know more of.

GAL Hence it seems to me the light is so important because the nature of God is seen in the Person of Jesus and how can we understand that light except in communion with Christ by the Spirit's power? I feel it touches the foundation of the whole thing really.

AJG Quite so. We read in Exodus 33, that Jehovah came down and spoke *with* Moses.

HAH So that John would be a model for us in that he is in the bosom of Jesus and on His breast.

AJG Quite so.

GM Would you connect with this matter of communion John's expression of "abiding in him"?

AJG I suppose abiding in Him would work out in communion. Abiding in Him is that we hold ourselves under His influence, so that He is before us as our standard, so to speak, the One from whom we derive impulse and character.

BGH I suppose there would not be very much self-judgment with us if we are not kept in communion. I am thinking of verses 8 and 9 particularly.

AJG Quite so. Now, we ought to move on to chapter 2. John says, "I write to you, children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake," verse 12. It is remarkable that he speaks to us all, because the word 'children' there covers us all, the fathers, and the young men, and the little children. He sets us all on

one common basis first before differentiating "Because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake." He is bringing Christ before us, "his name's sake," and the fact that our sins have been forgiven, which would involve that we are in the sense of it, that we are no longer going on with them.

TJG And using the most initial aspect of our blessing. It is not justification here, it is just forgiveness.

AJG Yes. I have often thought that in a sense we may have this before us when we come together to break bread. We all come together on common ground, the youngest believer and the oldest, our sins have all been forgiven for His name's sake, that is something we all owe to Christ, and we come together to break bread on common ground. You can take common ground with the youngest believer when we come together.

TJG You mean, it would have a fine binding effect upon us all.

AJG Yes.

JDW Then John was a father, was he not?

AJG Well, he certainly was.

JDW "I write to you, children." It was as a father communicating to children he was writing.

AJG I think that helps. In chapter 2 you might say we are John's children; in chapter 3 we are children of God, but in this chapter we are really being addressed as John's children.

HDT It may be that we have made rather a lot of the distinctions that come in and the grades, and of course, they do exist, but perhaps not sufficient of what places us together on the one common platform the thought of the breaking of bread. We are all loved with the same love, the Lord does not love some more than others. "For you" is the same love towards all. There may be difference of capacities to respond, but the love is the same.

AJG Yes, it is.

DMcI Why does he say "are forgiven," not "have been"?

AJG It is our abiding portion. It is what marks us characteristically and continually, so it says, in Ephesians 1: 7, "In whom we have redemption ... the forgiveness of sins." We do not want to lose the sense of being forgiven.

DMcI I think that is important.

EJH It speaks of young men in this family, but it does not say anything about old men.

AJG No, it is a question of growth in stature, spiritual stature, I suppose. There is no thought of being old, exactly; it is a question of being fathers, those who are fathers.

EJH They have their eye and their heart on the coming generation in regard to the preservation of the testimony.

AJG I would think so, but what characterises the fathers is that they have known and they know Him that is from the beginning.

EJH They would put all their experience and their joy and abiding satisfaction in Christ, they would put all that before the young men continually.

AJG Yes, I think that would exemplify the truth particularly.

HAH Would they be presented as the result of developed communion?

AJG Quite so, and contemplation too.

HDT Mr. Darby has a note to "ye have known him that is from the beginning" - 'The perfect tense; the state produced continues.' Yes. I believe that is important. So that there is a continual increase in the knowledge of Christ.

TJG And a state produced in that knowledge, referring to the note again. Not only that it continues, but a state produced, referring to the steady growth that is arrived at. I think we all realise the tremendous need for fathers today.

AJG I think so. It is a question of our being set in that direction ourselves, do you not think? So that we see it in Paul; as we were remarking yesterday, near the end of his course he says, "that I may know him."

BGH His remark to the Corinthians is very sobering, "If ye should have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers." Is the maintenance of the fatherly spirit amongst us really conducive to the enjoyment of eternal life amongst the saints?

AJG I think so. Fathers should have influence, and they do have influence just in the measure in which they exemplify the truth. So the Lord Himself took a fatherly position in regard to the disciples; He called them "children" more than once.

DMcI Is the thought of affection in it? In the next epistle he writes as an elder but here it is fathers. Is it affection that is in mind as well as maturity?

AJG I suppose it is. He does not say a great deal about it; he is pointing out that there are such, and what characterises them, and he leaves it at that.

GAL So in "him that is from the beginning" the true nature of God is seen. Is that what marks a father, that he has a real appreciation of the true nature of

God and can bring that to bear upon those amongst whom he is moving?

AJG Yes, and that he has a true appreciation of the Man too who answers to what God is.

GAL It was expressed in a Man.

AJG It is, but not only expressed in a Man, but then you see in Jesus the answer to it in a Man.

GAL I was thinking, as J.N.D. says, the greater part of Christ's manhood, the more glorious part, is seen in His relations with God.

AJG Quite so, and that is what we have to apprehend too, I think. I think we more easily understand the revelation of God in Christ than we understand the perfect answer to that revelation in Christ too.

GAL I thought the revelation covered both, really. It is different from priestly access, is it not? It is a life that is lived in receiving divine communications and revealing the nature of God and setting forth in perfection all the answer to that communication.

AJG Well, exactly. The two thoughts in a sense act and react on one another. At the same time you can apprehend the two thoughts distinctly; and the true manhood of Christ, as the perfect answer to God, is something to be constantly contemplated.

HDT Did not Mr. Raven say that the approach was equal to the revelation, speaking of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession? You have got the same idea in what you are saying now, the One in whom God is revealed sets forth God's perfect thoughts for man.

AJG Yes, quite so.

RGB You said earlier that the Father would have before Him the standard set out in Him who was from the beginning and would never deviate from that. Do you think that is important, that the standard set out in Christ should be held to and never surrendered?

AJG I believe that is of the utmost importance. We can thank God that the brethren are very much together in mutuality of affection now as compared with what they used to be; but there is just the danger of an element of sociability and all that kind of thing coming in. Not that one would be legal in any sense, but I do think we have to be careful to keep the standard before our hearts - the standard of Christianity.

EJH There are a good many young men here;

would you say a word in regard to the warning that is given to them and the commendation they have?

AJG Well. John says, "Love not the world, nor the things in the world," verse 15. I believe the things in the world are a much greater danger to us than the world itself, because most of us, through grace are fairly clear from the world itself as a system, but the great danger is bringing the principle or the things of the world into our own circle. So that when God was to bring His people into the land, He had first of all to bring them out of Egypt, which was bringing them out of the world as a system, and He did bring them out, but before they could really come into the land they had to overthrow Jericho. Jericho is not so much the system but the principles that have to be overthrown, and that answers more to the things that are in the world that may find a place in the Christian circle.

GM Is that where Achan failed?

AJG Yes, exactly, so that there was a powerful testimony when the walls of Jericho were thrown down, and in the early chapters of Acts you see, as you take account of what is said of the believers in the second chapter and the fourth chapter, that every principle of the world was completely overthrown. They were together and had all things in common and were contented and so on, and there was not a single element of the world finding a place in that company. But then in Ananias and Sapphira they began to introduce the element, and it was met at once, but you get the idea there.

TJG By understanding what the things of the world are we really get a true concept of what the world itself is. The apostle's word to the Colossians, "See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the *elements* of the world, and not according to Christ," Colossians 2: 8.

The elements of the world really give us to understand what the world is.

AJG Yes, in some form or another it brings in the first man again, whereas Christianity is Christ.

Ques Is "the first place" among us, which Diotrephes loved, one of the things in the world?

AJG It certainly is, and the reputation in the things of God which was what Ananias and Sapphira coveted.

FVW In what sense have the young men especially overcome the wicked one? It is mentioned twice.

AJG I think that they were sound in the faith. It is an allusion to the danger to which the little children were exposed, that is anti-Christian teaching and so on was the danger to which little children are exposed. But I think the young men had overcome all that, so that they were sound in the faith.

HDT That did not render them safe.

AJG It did not, exactly.

WMcK You have referred to the beginning of Acts and Ananias and Sapphira. Is it of note that the young men come to light in relation to their burial?

AJG That is very interesting. They were equal to it, to taking out Ananias and burying him, and then doing the same service to Sapphira. But you can understand what an exercising matter it would be to them, what heart searching it would produce with them to have to take Ananias and bury him, and then Sapphira too.

DMcI Would occupation with the things that are given into the hands of the Son preserve us from the things that are in the world?

AJG It would. So it says, "the Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand," (John 3: 35), so that we have to learn what it is the Father loves. You might say *who* it is the Father loves, but then we have to learn *what* it is in Christ that the Father loves, "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight." It raises the question as to what it is about Christ that causes such delight to the Father.

DMcI That is the reference to the love of the Father that is in this portion.

ECM Is it not beautiful in connection with the Lord Jesus at the age of twelve that He was occupied in the things of the Father? I wondered if that would be a preservative over against the things of the world.

AJG Yes, it would, quite so.

GAL Do we not see in John's gospel how thoroughly and absolutely the Lord Jesus overcomes the world right the way through?

AJG Yes. Mr. Raven used to say that He overcame by not surrendering. He would not surrender anything that was due to God.

GAL So He is able to say, "Now is the Son of man glorified." There is a Man going into death for the pleasure of God, the first One that had ever died for the pleasure of God, over whom Satan never, at any moment, acquired an atom of power.

AJG Quite so.

FGH In regard to verse 17, would doing the will of God be a preservative to us?

AJG Yes. "He that does the will of God abides for eternity," verse 17. So that you can see that the apostle is lifting us on to a plane that is entirely different from the principles that govern the world.

ALO Were the temptations of our Lord the attempts by the enemy to introduce the things of the world?

AJG It was, but I do not know that one can exactly, as is often done, identify the three temptations that are recorded with what is said here about the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They are often linked on with the three temptations, but I do not see myself that the presentation of bread could be called "the lust of the flesh." Still, that is by the way, the tempter, the devil, was seeking to get an entrance into the Lord, and of course, as we know, the Lord says, "he has nothing in me," John 14:30. There was nothing that the devil could act upon.

HDT Seeing we are looking at eternal life, the expression "the pride of life," is in very striking contrast. We might be able to specify the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, but the pride of life is an exceedingly searching matter, is it not?

BBB Would what is of the Father be known in the sphere of eternal life?

AJG I think it would. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand," and "he that believes on the Son has eternal life," John 3: 35 and 36. So that believing on the Son, we are introduced into the Father's sphere of interests and Christ is the centre of them, and so we learn what is pleasing to the Father in Christ.

HAH Is it important to get away from the mere thought of age in regard to all these three stages of growth?

AJG I think it is, because there are many of us who may be getting on in years, who may not be more than young men spiritually. I do not think there is any reason why a father should not become a father at a comparatively youthful age, and I have no doubt that Mr. Darby was a father when he was still quite a young man.

TJG So that fatherhood is not synonymous with eldership? Is that right?

AJG No. I do not think it is, quite.

HDT Hezekiah was only twenty-five when he said to the Levites, "My sons, be not now negligent." That was really the language of a father.

AJG Yes. Quite so.

ETERNAL LIFE (4)

1 John 3:16-24; 1 John 5:1-13; 1 John 5:19-21

AJG This chapter 3 of the epistle brings out the two generations which are on the earth, that is, those who are children of God as begotten of God, and those who are the children of the devil. There is the circle or system, in a moral sense, connected with each; the circle of the brethren, on the one hand, where love obtains, and the world on the other hand which lies in the wicked one; the first circle marked by life and the other by death. So that in verse 14 it says, "we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren"; and the two are opposed the one to the other. Chapter 5 brings in the thought of victory over the world. The passage we have read in chapter 3 is engaged with our knowing and persuading our hearts; that is, proving the reality of Christianity as allowing the truth to govern us and form us, and especially righteousness and love. Righteousness, in a practical sense, and love, are the outstanding features of the children of God; and in this passage we are urged to allow love to work out practically; first as learning it in Christ, as it says, "hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us," and then as learning to practise it. By this means we assure our hearts; it says, we persuade our hearts. So that the reality of the truth is proved and confirmed to us as we walk in it. It is striking that in verse 23 of chapter 3 we have a commandment, the idea of commandment being what God insists on, what He lays down as particularly for our good, that we are commanded to "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another," which links with what we had at the outset, the importance of active faith with us, that we are commanded to believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ. That is not simply an initial matter, but it is what is to characterise us.

EJH Verse 16 is not put on the basis of privilege or of being voluntary, but it is placed upon the basis of obligation. Is that what you have in mind in referring to the commandment, that it should be done? It is, "we *ought* for the brethren to lay down our lives."

AJG Yes, and I think as confirming us ourselves God has in mind that we should prove the power of Christianity; and then as moving in it in power there should be undeniable testimony in days when apostasy is increasing. So it is love that we have known, and not specifically the love of Christ, although it is the love of Christ, but it is love which is of God, as come into perfect expression in Christ. We learn it there, and then it is to work out in ourselves.

GAL So that God being known in that way every thought is held as binding on the saints. I was thinking of the Lord Jesus Himself. "This commandment have

I received of my Father." The Father's desire and thought in that sense was binding upon the Lord Jesus in love, was it not?

AJG Quite so. It is of great importance to realise that it is the truth that is in question ever since Satan introduced the lie into the heart of the woman, and then of the man; the truth as to God has been at issue and the saints now, as begotten of God, are to stand in it and walk in it.

HGH So is the suggestion that we have known love expressed by way of sacrifice, and that is to be expressed by us in the measure in which we have known it?

AJG That is it. So that Paul says to the Thessalonians that they were taught of God to love one another. It is natural to Christians to love one another. But he says, "we exhort you, brethren, to abound still more" - it is to be developed by practising it.

HDT Is this a reference to what the Lord said to His own after Judas had gone out? "A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves."

AJG Yes. It is a commandment. I think it is well to take note of this first part of the commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, that we should be characteristically believers on the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, all the renown that attaches to Him, because it opens up another world, another sphere altogether.

FWK How far does the expression go, "hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us"? Would you link it at all with, "Jesus ... having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end," John 13: 1? Would it involve more than His death, in that way, do you think?

AJG I think it is His death that is in view, that He has laid down His life for us. I think laying down the life is regarded as the full extent to which love goes. So that Paul says that he always bore about in his body the dying of Jesus; that is to say, he was carrying the sense of it in his soul and that strengthened him to continue on the line of serving the saints even to the extent of laying down *his* life for them, if needs be.

DMcI Are you linking this with what the Lord said, "on this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life," John 10: 17?

AJG The Lord says there, "because I lay down my life that I may take it again." It is the taking it again that is especially in view there. Of course, the Father found great pleasure in the sacrifice of Christ, the laying down of His

life; but it was the taking it again that the Lord emphasises there. But here it is the great expression of love that is to be operative as an impelling motive to us. So it says in Genesis 4 that Eve conceived and bore a son and called him Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah." But she made a great mistake. Then it says, "she further bore his brother Abel." As soon as there was a man born God brought in a brother; but this only served to bring out that "Cain was of the wicked one and slew his brother." But it was intended that love should be developed, so God brought a brother upon the scene and love is developed amongst the brethren.

FS What is involved in believing on the Name?

AJG It is the renown of Christ, not only involving what He has done in His death, but involving the scene of which He is the centre. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand." It is part of His renown that He has risen from among the dead and ascended, and is the centre of another world, a world of love; and we are to believe on the name of God's Son. Jesus Christ.

HDT Does it also involve that these things are worked out during the time of Christ's absence?

AJG Yes, it certainly does. What have you in mind in that?

HDT I was thinking there will be much achieved when the Lord takes the reins over and holds everything personally here. I wondered whether the name involved His absence from this scene. He is not here personally but His name is here. It involves the present time and all that is secured substantially in the saints.

AJG I think that is right, because it is in the present time that the contest between the truth and the lie is being worked out to God's glory in the children of God, those born of Him. We have the sphere of eternal life and the enjoyment of eternal life as over against the world as a system and its moral features.

TJG So do these features in our first passage, chapter 3, display some of the interests and pursuits of the eternal life circle?

AJG I think so. It has in mind that we are to be confirmed in the truth. "Hereby we shall know that we are of the truth and shall persuade our hearts before him." The whole point in the epistle seems to be a confirmatory idea that we may know that we have eternal life and prove the power of Christianity.

WMcK You referred to the idea of being begotten of God; is that the idea that we are made partakers of the divine nature, and is it a matter of that nature having full liberty in this system?

AJG Yes, I think so, and the brethren are the circle in which it is to develop. We are not exactly called upon or regarded as loving men; we show grace to men as God does; but it is in the circle of the brethren that love is to be developed. So that God provided Cain with a brother, a brother Abel, and Abel loved Cain, for God told Cain that his desire would be toward him.

EJH Does not God say to Moses, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well; and also behold, he goeth out to meet thee; and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart." God put a brother in touch with one who is to be His servant, and they laboured together in the truth.

AJG Yes, quite so.

HGH So the expression, "laid down his life for us," is the Christian circle "us"?

AJG Yes, it is the brethren.

HDT Does Paul have this in mind when he says, "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," Ephesians 5: 1, 2? Is Paul touching pretty much what John is saying here?

AJG Yes, I think so.

HDT The circle of the brethren is the place where love is expressed and reciprocated.

AJG Quite so. Then it contemplates that as having the Holy Spirit there is a certain sensitiveness with us so that it is possible that our heart may condemn us. So it says, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things," that is, it is well for us to face matters if our heart does condemn us because we cannot conceal things from God, although we sometimes try to conceal them from ourselves or from the brethren. But if our heart condemn us, it is well to face things with God and judge the element of darkness that is causing the condemnation.

TJG How are we aware of the condemnation? Is it because of the knowledge that God is greater than our heart?

AJG I think it is what the Spirit makes us aware of if we are sensitive.

FGH Why is the heart referred to, "if our *heart* condemn us"? It is not a matter of conscience exactly? Does it refer to the affections?

AJG I think it does, and what we are as begotten of God. I mean, a man who is not born again has a conscience, but this is somewhat on a higher plane. It is a question of the children of God and those who are regarded as moving consistently with what God is in His nature.

HDT Does it not stress the inward side of things in contrast to what is merely external? God looks on the heart not on the outward appearance.

AJG Quite so.

FWT Would we be more sensitive if the principle we were speaking of this morning, communion, were better known to us?

AJG I think so, and especially if we are exercised to abide in Christ. "Hereby we have known love because *he* has laid down his life for us." As abiding in Christ we are constantly reminded of that.

HDT So in the corresponding passage quoted from Ephesians we have the injunction, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption," Ephesians 4: 30. Would that not bring about the sensitiveness that would keep us right inwardly as well as externally?

AJG I am sure it would. Then, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." Therefore, we can get to God about it, because He has a perfect answer to all that is discovered in ourselves that is out of keeping with Himself, and we can get adjusted. If our heart condemn us not we have boldness towards God, and whatsoever we ask we receive from Him. It is striking the importance which John, in his epistle (chapters 3, 4 and 5), attaches to our having power with God in asking, something which the Lord made much of in John 16.

EJH Is that on the line of "the pure in heart shall see God"? Matthew 5: 8.

AJG Yes, as having access to God. It is a great thing to have access to God, to be able to use the influence we have with God on behalf of others. Abraham did that.

DMcI The footnote says that 'God being greater' is evidently a testing searching thing. Would you say a word as to that?

AJG Well, we all know the tendency with us to deceive ourselves sometimes and keep up appearances; but God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. So that we may as well be open and transparent with God; it is our safety and our blessing. "If our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." Therefore, do not go on in that state; get things

right, and He has the means of helping us and enabling us to judge ourselves in the light of Christ.

WMcK Does it imply that God is not condemning us, even if our hearts condemn us? God is greater, and He is toward us in that way.

AJG I think so - He is toward us; He wants us to be moving with Him without a shade. So, "if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness towards God, and whatsoever we ask we receive from him."

GAL Is part of the lie of the enemy to which you referred earlier that God is *not* for us? So that this is completely undone as in the consciousness of His presence.

AJG Quite so.

GM Is there an instance of this in John 21, where the Lord sifts Peter in order that he might have boldness, and the heart's exercises are exposed?

AJG Quite so. The Lord is very tender in that chapter, very gracious; not a word of reproach. They come and find a fire of coals and fish laid thereon and bread, and "Jesus says to them, Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken." He is acting very tenderly toward them in grace, and as having laid that basis in their souls, and with it resting upon their spirits. He gently but firmly searches Peter so as to set him up again in unhindered communion.

GAL Have you any thought as to verse 22, "whatsoever we ask we receive from him"? It seems that this intimacy would give us to know what to ask for. I was thinking, in contradistinction, in Romans 8, in relation to the groaning creation, it is said that we know not what to ask for. That is not the ground taken here, is it?

AJG No, that is not the ground here. "We receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and practise the things which are pleasing in his sight." That does not quite touch the question of our intelligence to know what to ask. But I think the passage in John's gospel does, where the Lord says, "if ye abide in me" - that would deliver us from all lawlessness and make us morally acceptable - "and my words abide in you" - that will make us intelligent - "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall come to pass to you."

HDT Is that not in relation to the testimony, and not our own personal matters?

AJG I think it is. Here this epistle seems to work out that we are our brother's keeper, so that in the earlier part of the chapter, in verse 17, it says, "whoso may have the world's substance, and see his brother having need, and shut up

his bowels from him" That is, we have our eyes open to the physical needs of our brethren. Then in chapter 5 we have our eyes open to their moral needs; verse 16 says, "if any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for those that do not sin unto death." So that there is the practical setting out that we are, in fact, our brother's keeper. It is remarkable how much details of the incident of Cain and Abel, if looked into, are worked out in this epistle.

MHT Is it not striking that in one of the two references in the Old Testament to eternal life (namely in Psalm 133), you have clearly laid down what you have been pressing, the moral basis on which it is enjoyed, namely, harmony and unity and love amongst the brethren?

AJG Yes, that is very striking.

ACC You spoke of Cain and Abel: would Abel have confidence in approaching God with his offering that God was pleased with Abel and his offering, in contrast to Cain who would be self-condemned?

AJG Yes, I think so. Righteousness and love are the great features in which God is known, you might say, and typically we can see that they were both brought into evidence in the coats of skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve; that is, there was the maintenance of righteousness and the moving in love towards His creature, and that became the testimony which Abel embraced, his offering was in keeping with that. But Cain ignores all that; he was of that wicked one and slew his brother.

RGB Were you thinking that what we have in this chapter would lay the basis in our souls for power with God in prayer, so that we might be the more serviceable in the helping and care of our brethren?

AJG I think so. It is illustrated in Esther, who was already pleasing to the king as a result of the process she went through; but then she has to be exercised as to whether she is prepared to lay down her life for the brethren if she is to acquire power with the king, and she answers to the test and does acquire power with the king.

WS The whole purpose of it is to give us confirmation in our souls as to the truth.

AJG That is it.

JGW In your reference to verse 17, I would like you to say why *God* is so much mentioned here, because in chapter 2 it says, "the love of the *Father* is not in him," and in verse 17 it says, "how abides the love of *God* in him." Would you say why there is a difference?

AJG The main thought is GOD. In chapter 4, from which we have not read, God is mentioned, I think, twenty-nine times, showing what a prominent thought GOD is in this epistle. In the passage to which you refer in chapter 2 where it says, "the love of the Father is not in him," it is because it is the world in contrast to the Father's world. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand." So that there are the two worlds in juxtaposition or in contrast, but the main thought in the epistle is GOD, the true thought of God; so that it is not the love of Christ, it is not called that, but "hereby we have known love" - that is what God is in His nature, "because he has laid down his life for us."

EJH Is this to be characteristic of us all? It is not a few who are to lay down their lives for the brethren or to be expressive of these things. It would bring before us a wonderful circle where everybody is doing the same thing, would it not?

AJG It would, and therefore it is a great circle of life in the presence of a circle of moral death.

GAL Are the consequences very much seen in the book of Genesis, where Judah was prepared to lay down his life for the brethren? The moral consequences of that were very great.

AJG Quite so.

CJHD Was the truth as to unity involved in Acts 15 and settled in such a way that love could be shown in expression in the chosen men who had given up their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ?

AJG That would commend them, I suppose, in a peculiar way to the brethren. Is that what you had in mind?

CJHD Yes, and whether it would lead to unity that such men would be sent as expressive of the truth that had been stood for in Acts 15?

AJG Exactly.

RGB Would this stress the importance of the local assembly as the place where love may be worked out and developed? I was thinking how the enemy is seeking to disrupt the local companies of the saints. But would it suggest that the local company is the circle where divine love may be developed?

AJG I believe that is important, because while John does not exactly deal with local assemblies,

and what we are speaking of is proper to the whole circle of God's children, yet in actual fact it has to work out in the local company, it has to work out in

those who are near to us. So that love is not to be a mere abstraction, it is to be a practical thing.

TJG So it says in verse 17, "and see his brother ... ", and then again, "if any one see his brother ... " (chapter 5: 16), as though it is what is immediately near or local in that sense.

AJG Yes.

HAH Why is the land divided into families, allotted according to families?

AJG That all runs along with this.

HDT Paul devotes a whole chapter to love in 1 Corinthians, showing that if the local gathering is to function according to God, love must be in operation. So what John brings forward underlies all that Paul ministers, does it not?

AJG It does, indeed. It is really the thought of the body, the thought of love operating. Then in the end of the first epistle to the Corinthians Paul says, "let all your things be done in love."

GAL Hence the testimony is really seen in power in the saints manifestly in the gain of eternal life?

AJG That is it. That really underlies the public position.

HFR Would it help us as to impartiality? It is the love of God and it has been expressed in the laying down of the life of Christ. It would help us to be general, to lay down our lives for *the brethren*.

AJG Yes. It is not loving one particular brother or sister, but the brethren, wherever the need may be or whoever they are.

HDT "If ye love those that love you, what thank is it to you," Luke 6: 32. "Do not also the tax-gatherers the same," Matthew 5: 46.

AJG Quite so. So that here in chapter 5 it is "everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and everyone that loves him that has begotten" - that is, loves God - "loves also him that is begotten of him," that is, that the children of God are loved because they are that.

FWK Do we see the effectiveness of love in Acts 20? I was thinking of Paul and the Ephesian saints, and the response on their part to the love of which he spoke, and the way he had laid down his life for the saints.

AJG Quite so, and the way it was reciprocated.

JFP Do we see the result of this in the second and third epistles in connection with the elect lady and Gaius? I wondered whether it was the practical

working out of those who had committed themselves in love in this way, accepting the obligation.

AJG I think so, so that in the second epistle it works out in excluding evil or evil-doers. In the third epistle it works out in hospitality in Gaius and in walking in the truth, and so on, and in receiving and setting forward those who had gone forth for the Name.

GAL Reverting to an earlier remark, is there not a very great need for these things in our localities now? To face the matter practically, the enemy is very busy in many localities, and this is the very thing that is called for to meet that, is it not?

AJG It is. I think it will greatly help us if we get a right outlook on things and see that the real point of contest is the truth, what God is in contrast to the enemy's lie; and we are taken up to support the truth by walking in it.

GM Is there not a difference between this reference to abiding in the love of God in chapter 3 and Jude's reference to keeping ourselves in the love of God, which is in connection with eternal life?

AJG You are referring to verse 24 of chapter 3?

GM The end of verse 17, and Jude's reference in verse 21, "keep yourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

AJG In this epistle of John it is the thought of the love of God in him, and in Jude it is a question of our keeping ourselves in that love, you might say; the two things work together. But we are to keep ourselves in the love of God as a preservative.

GM I would like help as to this matter of keeping ourselves in the love of God, and the obligation being upon us.

AJG There is an obligation on us. We get the same sort of thing in this epistle where it says, "he that is born of God *keeps himself*." We may pray to God and the Lord to keep us; that is quite right: At the same time there is a responsibility to keep ourselves; we have the power to do so because we are born of God and have the Holy Spirit.

EJH "Keep yourselves from idols" are the last word of the epistle.

AJG Quite so.

HDT Paul says to Timothy, "thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee," 1 Timothy 4: 16. So that there is not only the keeping of yourself but the keeping of your brother.

AJG Quite so, and there are certain lines on which we are preserved; it is the line of allowing the truth to regulate our outlook and form our conduct.

EJH "To keep oneself unspotted from the world," James 1: 27.

AJG Yes, quite so.

THW Is that why Peter, in his second epistle, says, "in brotherly love, love," chapter 1: 7?

AJG Quite so; that is, it is the pure divine nature working out in us.

TJG It says also, "having purified your souls by obedience to the truth and to unfeigned brotherly love," 1 Peter 1: 22. Is it in the circle of truth that we provide this unfeigned love to the brother? I have in mind your reference to the truth being really the ground of contest.

AJG Quite so. So there has to be the overcoming of the world in all its principles. So it speaks here - of all "that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world, and this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith." That is the Christian faith, not exactly the faith that is in one but the Christian faith. "Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

HDT So the truth becomes practically invulnerable as there is a practical exemplification of it in persons.

AJG Quite so.

WMcK Is that the world referred to particularly in the aspect as seen in Jericho, which you were referring to this morning?

AJG I believe it is. I think it helps to see that Egypt is the world as a great system going on in independence of God, and we have to be redeemed out of that. I suppose it would be right to say, in the main, we are delivered from the world as a great system. Then Jericho was the great obstruction to the people entering into God's thoughts for them in the land, but it had to be overthrown. I believe Jericho is not so much a system as principles, principles of the world coming into the Christian circle; and I believe it is in that way that Satan does his utmost to prevent us entering fully into the land; and they have to be overthrown. So it is not a question simply of not loving the world, but not loving the things that are in the world.

PAR Is that overthrown by what is in the ark, represented there?

AJG Yes, the testimony as to the ark. So that we have here, "everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." That excludes every other man. Jesus is *the* Christ; there is only one Christ. He is *the* anointed of God,

and that excludes every other man. We have to keep that in our minds because we so easily admit in our own thoughts and lives the principles of the first man. Jesus is to be before our hearts as *the* Christ; and then He is the Son of God. He is the great centre of another system altogether, a system of love; and the more these things are before our hearts the more we shall overcome the world.

JFP So that it says characteristically in Hebrews, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled for seven days," and then following that you get Rahab, that is, personal faith: "by faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with the unbelieving, having received the spies in peace," Hebrews 11: 30, 31.

AJG Yes, she is an example of the sovereign work of God.

WHL In verses 4 and 5 do we get one great victory that has been completed, "this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith," and then the need with everyone of us being on the line of the overcomer?

AJG I think that is right. I suppose, you might say, in the beginning of the Acts we find there is a victory that got the victory over the world. If you read those few verses in chapters 2 and 4 which describes what marked the early believers, you get the impression that there was a circle there in which every element of the world was excluded, not a single element of selfishness appeared there. So the world is overthrown in that circle. But now it is to be carried forward into our practical experience. "Who is he that gets the victory over the world but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

HDT Would it be right to say that one is presented impersonally and the other is presented very personally? The truth still stands abstractly but it is a question of whether I am in it.

AJG Yes, quite so.

GAL I suppose the Jericho world would contain what John is combating here, evil doctrines that are brought against Christianity?

AJG Quite so, because if evil doctrines are allowed they subvert the whole position.

GAL I was thinking even of sisters being in the gain of this. You get people coming round to the door with subversive literature; so that all are brought into it. Is it not good to have the truth in our souls, and to be able to stand for it and to get this victory over the evil?

AJG Quite so, and hence to know how to apply the test that is given us in chapter 4: "every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not

of God." It is a question of what the doctrine says of Christ and how it presents Christ. If it is not absolutely clear as to His Deity and His having become truly Man, then it is to be rejected, it is not of God.

GAL Is it not that there has to be a positive confession of that truth? If it is not a positive confession, then it is not of God.

DMcI This again is intensely individual; it is "every one" in verse 1, and "who is *he* that gets the victory" in verse 5, and follows up the line we have been pursuing of active faith.

AJG Quite so.

RH The man in John 9 could say, "I believe." Does he get the victory over the world there?

AJG Yes, he does; he was true to the light he had. That has often been said, and I think we can see it, as John 9 proceeds, that just what measure of light he had he was true to, and the result was that he was cast out; but his being cast out really means he was getting the victory over the world, he was not surrendering any element of truth.

EJH He had the substance of the truth in his soul before the Lord gave him light as to what it meant.

AJG Yes, exactly. So he can say, "one thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see." So that he was really on the line of this epistle that he knew certain things.

ELM Would he be a characteristic saint who would come into the gain of eternal life in chapter 10?

AJG Yes, I think so. It has often been said he was a sheep that would be placed in the flock in chapter 10, and as we were saying yesterday the Lord gives to the flock, to His sheep, eternal life. So that man certainly would find his place in eternal life.

TJG Referring to the expression "our faith," would it be right to say that that is the truth as a system given by God outside of human means and received by us outside of human means?

AJG Yes, I suppose so; but what is in your mind in stressing that 'outside of human means'?

TJG In that it is called "faith." "Our faith" is the truth as a system, would you say, but called "our faith" because it is given outside of human channels or means and received outside of human means.

AJG Quite so, and because the central object in the faith is Jesus and He is not to be seen: "whom, *not* having seen, ye love." We have not yet seen Him; it is a whole system of faith. Unseen things become the life of the saints.

HDT Viewed abstractly what is of God must prevail. But the next verse would stress the importance of our personally being in the good of it.

AJG Yes, I think so.

GM In one sense the victory has been secured, but in our case in order to come into the good of it it involves suffering. Is that wrapped up in John 16: 33, "in the world ye have tribulation, but be of good courage, I have overcome the world"?

AJG Yes, quite so. We were speaking this morning about "that which was from the beginning," that is, the beginning of Christianity; and the more it is looked at the more the early chapters of the Acts are found to run along with this epistle of John. You find on the day of Pentecost the world was completely overthrown in the souls of those who received the testimony, and you find that which was from the beginning in the early chapter of Acts, following that which is presented in the gospels in regard to Christ personally, which, of course, is what is referred to in the first chapter of this epistle.

FWK Would Colossians bear on this, the saints viewed as complete in Him, and then the system of error at the end of chapter 2; and then the minds of the saints directed to Christ, "your life is hid with Christ in God," chapter 3: 3? Would that be Paul's way of presenting this line of the truth?

AJG Yes, pretty much, I suppose. I do not know that in the main we are so much in danger of error - we are not immune from it - but speaking generally those walking in the truth have been brought up in the truth and are not so much in danger of error; we are more in danger of the things that are in the world.

EJH Do we need, therefore, continual believing for continual victory? We cannot say that if we believed some time ago we have overcome the world. Is that not to be maintained all along the line?

AJG I think so, and the principle of feeding, as we were having yesterday, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and then "eating Me," as the Lord says.

HDT Does that not lead on to the witness in ourselves?

AJG I think it does. So that we come to these verses, from verse 6 and onwards which are very important, the three-fold witness to the fact that God

has given us eternal life and that life is in His Son.

THW You said yesterday afternoon that you had something in mind specifically in relation to "the Spirit is the truth."

AJG I believe that is a matter of great importance. We have first of all the water and the blood. "This is he that came by water and blood; not by water only but by water and by blood," and then it says, "it is the Spirit that bears witness." The Spirit is the positive element and the Spirit is the truth. I think I can see more and more that is one reason why the thought of the Spirit is being so much emphasised amongst us, and we are being exercised as to how far we really touch things in the Spirit every time we come together, because it is what we prove experimentally in the Spirit that really becomes the truth to us.

GAL Would you say it touches the truth of the Spirit as a divine Person, and active as such, as well as indwelling each of us? "The Spirit is the truth," 1 John 5: 6. He is a divine Person, and the whole of the truth is there in the Spirit, is it not?

AJG Quite so. One may form certain thoughts about the truth which may be accurate; but then in the Spirit, as we move in the Spirit, we may become greatly enlarged. The Spirit Himself is the truth. So that the river in Ezekiel was first up to his ankles, then up to his knees, then to his loins, and then at last it was a river to swim in. It was the same river all along but the more he went on in it the more it enlarged to him.

WS Is not that supported by the fact that the word 'know' in this chapter is nearly always conscious knowledge? So that the substance of the epistle is really found here in conscious knowledge.

AJG That is the thought, and we are to come into Christianity consciously and prove the power of it.

RJB So that as coming together particularly in assembly should we prove, not only that we know the truth, but that we have some experience of its working out and its true power and vitality?

AJG That is exactly what one has in mind, and then we discover we have power to move in it in the liberty and dignity and intelligence that the Spirit affords.

AFB You spoke yesterday of active faith: would this be active testimony in relation to the Spirit that the water and the blood bore witness?

AJG The water and the blood clear the ground, you might say. It is the testimony to our souls of the bearing of the death of Christ, the cleansing power of it as setting us apart from all that we were, and the blood as establishing righteous relations with God as well as testifying to divine love. But then, the Spirit is the positive power; it is in the Spirit that we move into the truth.

HDT So that this witness is the witness in ourselves rather than the working out in testimony, is it?

AJG Exactly. It is not the thought of testimony man-ward; it is inward testimony, the witness to ourselves.

WMcK We have been speaking of our faith as being the system of truth. Is the thought of the Spirit being the truth a matter of that becoming substantial with us?

AJG I think so. I believe that is one of our greatest needs at the moment, because we are not without light - we can thank God for that; but our greatest need is the power and the liberty that are in keeping with the light, and that is only in the Spirit.

WS There is rather a remarkable statement of F.E.R.'s that faith is not peculiar to the present dispensation, but conscious knowledge is.

AJG That is all in line with what we are having.

TJG So that the evidence that the truth is substantial with us and we are in it substantially would be that our instinctive behaviour is governed by it.

AJG Yes, because we are viewed here as born of God, therefore our movements normally are the result of nature.

ECM Would you say a word on "he that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself" verse 10?

AJG It is all referring to what the Spirit is to us; the believer has the witness in himself. He does not need to pin his faith on a text of Scripture, but has the witness in himself; he knows that he loves God and loves the brethren and has liberty with God. All that is the witness in himself that the Spirit affords.

GAL In the power of that witness he knows association with the Son of God who is the Head of the great system of which you spoke, the great system of love.

AJG Quite so.

HAH Is this the way God's world is opened up to us as over against the present world?

AJG I think so, exactly. It is the entrance we have in a real way, not simply as light but as actual power in life, the entrance we have into another world of which Christ is the centre, because God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. We are set up in life in the Son, so that we are really at the very centre of things.

HDT Does this not warrant the statement that has been made that the Spirit of God operates within the limits of faith?

AJG It does indeed, and that is why that statement in chapter 3 is so important that God commands us to believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. A command is something that is essential, that we are not to disregard.

HDT The witness of the Spirit seems to be confined in this case to those who believe in a present way. "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself" (verse 10), as though one is contingent upon the other.

AJG Yes, I am sure of that.

AWP Do you mean that what you enter into you are consistent with personally?

AJG Quite so.

AWP There is no divergence, and the way is clear because you are in accordance in every way. The Spirit is the truth but you answer to the Spirit.

AJG The Spirit is leading us into things and is Himself the truth. He is the Spirit of sonship, for instance. He is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The more we know what the Spirit is to us the more we find that we are actually moving in the truth in these things.

ECM In chapter 1 we have "the eternal life, which was with the Father," and now that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Is it a more fixed matter in connection with the thought of His Son?

AJG Well, it is a fixed matter, I think; that is where the life is. It is not in ourselves, it is in His Son.

HDT In that connection, I would like to ask as to this thought of faith, whether there is not the need for the objective side of the truth to be steadily before the brethren, and commensurately giving place to the Spirit so that there may be correspondence with it? In point of fact what is presented to us in Christ is one of the things which provides the impulse for our exercise in giving place to the Spirit.

AJG I am sure of that.

HDT Because if we take up this thought of the Spirit and the witness in ourselves apart from what is presented to us perfectly in Christ and that which is apprehended by faith, we may become very introspective without very much outlet.

AJG I think so, and hence we need to bear in mind the way Christ has come; He has come by water and blood; that is, there is the setting aside of the man altogether and that leaves us shut up to the Spirit.

GAL So that is the thought in what has just been presented that, you might say, the setting forth of the truth personally is in the Son. The Spirit is the power to make it real to our hearts and to bring us into conformity with it and the Son is the object.

AJG Yes, but the Spirit is positive life; it is not simply giving us light as to things but positive power.

GAL A divine Person in every respect; He is *God*.

AJG Quite so.

ECM Is there not a touch of peculiar affection in the thought of "his Son"? We noticed this morning, "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son ... " and now this life is *in His Son* (verse 11).

AJG There is, and I think it is a most touching thing that we are really brought into a system of life and blessing which the Godhead has devised of itself, and carries through by itself. We are introduced into it in the Spirit but the Son has effected redemption and the Spirit has come in and taken up His abode in us. So we are really embraced in God, you might say. It is a most touching thing that we are embraced, you might say, in the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

HDT Is it not by that process that what is presented to us as light becomes life in us in the power of the Spirit?

AJG Yes.

ERH Would there be any link between "the unction from the Holy One" in chapter 2, and having the witness in himself in this chapter?

AJG I think the unction is a more limited thought. "The unction" is particularly connected with what the Spirit is to us in the way of intelligence and discernment; intelligence as to the truth and discernment as to what is according to the truth and what is not. I think the unction is, in that sense, a more limited thought. But here the Spirit bears witness because the Spirit is the truth; in the Spirit we move in the truth in the conscious enjoyment of it,

the consciousness that we ourselves are equal to it, not in ourselves but in the Spirit.

DMcI Is the expression in the beginning of verse 12, "he that has the Son has life," a further thing than "he that believes on the Son of God ..."? I was thinking, is it not by the operation of the Spirit that it can be said, "he that has the Son ..."?

AJG I suppose so, yes.

DMcI What does "he that has the Son" really mean for us?

AJG It involves faith on our part, but it involves that the Son is held in our affections, too.

MHT I notice that the statement "the Spirit is the truth" is said to be a reciprocal proposition, that is to say, both sides of the statement are of equal value. It could be said "the truth is the Spirit." It is very interesting to compare that with the reciprocal proposition of chapter 1 of John's gospel relative to the Lord personally, where it says that the life was the light of men; verse 4. That, too, can be put round the other way, "the light of men was the life." I thought you have these two very important statements, one bringing out the objective character of the truth and the other the subjective character.

AJG Quite so. I well remember years ago in a meeting in London we were speaking on "the new and living way," and Mr. Taylor was asked to explain what it meant, and he said, 'If you had been in a meeting with Peter and Paul, and you heard them speak to God, you would have got an impression of the new and living way in contrast to all the formality that people are accustomed to in the service of God.' That is the idea, that "the Spirit is the truth." You see the thing in the power of the Spirit, you see persons moving in the Spirit and you yourself know a little of it and you are conscious that it is the truth that you are in. It is not just light but it is the real thing that you are moving in in power.

TJG Would there be something of that in the possessive thought referred to, "he that has the Son has life" (verse 12), noticing that in the second epistle, "whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God," 2 John 9? The thing is there in life and power and possessive reality.

AJG Quite so.

THW Is that at all related to the last few verses of Ephesians 3, "according to the power that works in us"?

AJG Well, it is. It is a wonderful thing that the Spirit Himself - and, as has been said more than once, He is God Himself - should come in so that we should be made equal to these great things, in order that the answer in us to what God has proposed from Himself and in Christ should be equal to and worthy of God. So God Himself, in the Spirit, has come in to make it a reality to us.

THW So that in connection with the man in Ezekiel and the measuring of the river, it says on three occasions, "he caused me to pass through," chapter 47.

AJG Yes. But then in the end he found they were waters he could not pass through, but he could swim in them.

JGW Is what we have in verse 20, "we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ," a still further truth to our souls?

AJG The apostle is summing things up; he says, "we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." You could not have a more striking statement than that - the circle of the brethren, that is, the children of God, on the one hand, and the world as a system lying in the wicked one! Then it says, "we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true," that is, God, "and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ." So that it is a wonderful thing that we come to what is absolutely true, God Himself, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.

ECM Does it not bring out the superiority of Christianity over against everything else?

AJG It does, exactly. It is to establish us, that we can say, "we know" - we are in the thing - we know it.

WMcK It is very striking there is nothing between. It is either a system of truth or a system that lies in the wicked one.

AJG That is so. According to the way the truth is presented in John's epistle abstractly, but very really, it is just that: either the children of God or the children of the wicked one.

HDT I suppose we will have to face a clearer line of demarcation as time goes on. The nearer the Lord's return the more the two systems will stand in contrast.

AJG I think that is so. Things have perhaps been to some extent beclouded as to their true character by the influence outwardly that Christianity has had in the countries where it obtained a certain place. Now it is being given up and

therefore things are standing out in their true character, either it is what is of God or what is of the devil.

GAL Each thing we have to stand against, each bit of conflict, will raise the question of faith in overcoming the world; the facing of trade unionism is really that in principle. It is in the faith of the Son of God that we overcome the world.

AJG Quite so. But it is a great thing to know God as the One who is true - absolutely reliable.

GAL Everything in Him is truth.

AJG Quite so.

EJH Should we be exercised in the power of the Spirit to draw alongside of Christ, the One who could say that He was "altogether that which I also say to you," John 8: 25? It says in the footnote, 'in the principle and universality of what I am. His speech presented Himself, being the truth.' That is how the epistle ends; apart from the appeal in verse 21, it ends with the statement "he," that is, Christ, "is the true God and eternal life," as though we are to keep our attention concentrated on Him. He is the true God and God is perfectly known in Him. Then He is also the eternal life, the setting out in Himself of man in right relations with God.

- .M. As these meetings have been all of a piece, I wondered whether you could go back for a moment to John 6. Would it be out of place to touch again the matter that many seem to have needed help on, the thought of eating the flesh of the Son of man and drinking His blood?

AJG It is a question, I think, of our minds first of all and then by means of the mind the affections, occupying themselves with the fact that Christ came in deliberately to die, because the allusion to His flesh and His blood separately evidently implies His death. It says He came down from heaven and He took up flesh and blood condition deliberately to die, that is, by His death to end that condition and in Himself as Man beyond death to introduce a new condition of life in which we are given part by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are to feed our minds on that, so that we do not settle down in natural things. It is not simply the setting aside of flesh but the setting aside of the natural order of things in favour of the spiritual.

GAL Would you say that while the eternal life is seen in Christ as to the full expression of it, we could have no part in what was manifested in Christ apart from His death?

AJG None at all. It is only in the Spirit that we touch these things, and we could not possibly have been given the Spirit unless Christ had died.

ETERNAL LIFE (5)

Galatians 3: 25 - 29; Galatians 4: 1 - 7; Ephesians 3: 14 - 21

AJG I was thinking of the distinctiveness of what has now come in in Christianity and of the way that it is intended to work out in glory to God. Where we started reading it says, "But, faith having come." Perhaps we do not sufficiently realise that this is now the period of faith; in contrast to periods that went before in God's ways, that faith has now come as the distinctive characteristic of the period and that involves that God is before us and that Christ is before us, and there is no room now for man, man in flesh: as it says in Philippians, "we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh," chapter 3: 3. Christianity is now the time of faith and of promise, that is, on God's side, He has moved now on the principle of promise, and on our side, we come into it on the principle of faith, and both of these make everything of God and nothing of us, and that is what God intends, that everything should be made of God, as we were singing, "Glory all belongs to God." Hence the chapter brings in that God has "sent forth his Son," and then that He "has sent out the Spirit of his Son," so that there is the Spirit in Galatians in the character of the Spirit of God's Son; and in Ephesians we have the Father, and we have Christ, and we have the Spirit in the character of the Father's Spirit. But the intention is that God is to become everything to us, and in result should be glorified. God's ways in previous dispensations, under the law and so on, were to make way for this, that hope must centre in God and in Christ, and there was no hope on any other principle than in what God would be pleased to show Himself to be, and the resource to carry out His thoughts that He had in Christ, and the resource too, there is in the Spirit to bring man into it. So that this chapter in Galatians is bringing out the great thought of sonship as being what was in God's mind for men - no less thought than that in the glad tidings. As has been said, there is no first and second and third class of blessing in this dispensation, "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus," - and in order that that might be brought in, God has sent forth His Son to redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship, and then has "sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

GAL Faith in Christ Jesus would be faith in the Man in the glory.

AJG Yes, it would indeed. It says, "For ye, as many as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ," so that Christ is the One in whom God sets out now the thoughts of blessing that He has in mind for man.

GAL And Christ, as glorified by the Father.

AJG Quite so.

HDT So Peter says, "God ... has raised him from among the dead and given him glory, that your faith and hope should be in God," 1 Peter 1: 21. Is that an entire transference of every hope and aspiration from man to God?

AJG I think so. I think it helps to see that on God's side it is all based on promise; what God was pleased sovereignly to commit Himself to. On our side it is all based on faith, on that principle, that faith makes everything of God and of Christ, and nothing of us.

GAL So all the distinction in verse 28 belongs to Adam's order, do they not?

AJG Yes.

GAL Over against that we have Christ, "ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

DMcI Will you open that out for us? "Ye are all *one*" - what does it mean?

AJG I suppose it involves that these distinctions have all disappeared. It is seen, I suppose, in the assembly; it is seen in the new man, "where there is not Greek and Jew," it says in Colossians, "circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything, and in all," Colossians 3: 11.

DMcI Does it involve sonship actually here?

AJG It certainly does, because there is no less thought than that in God's mind, so that in preaching the gospel, whether we actually present it in what is announced or not, that is what is in God's mind in the preaching, that people should receive sonship, and nothing less than that.

HDT Is not "in Christ Jesus" the divinely provided status for man, in a Man out of death?

AJG It is, and not only in a Man out of death, but in *that* Man.

FGH So you would have sonship in mind in preaching the gospel.

AJG Yes, I think so. Sonship is primarily for the pleasure of God, and so the Spirit here is presented as the Spirit of God's Son, not even exactly the Spirit of adoption, although it is the same thing, but it seems to me that the Spirit of adoption in Romans is stressing our side of the matter, that we are enabled in the Spirit to take up the position God's love has placed us in - we are sons by adoption - but here this has God's side of the matter in view, so it is the Spirit of God's Son, so that the response from the saints of God should be fully in the affections of God's Son.

HDT So in Romans the contrast is, "ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8: 15), stressing what you have just said.

AJG Exactly, that the Spirit enables us to move freely in the position God has set us in, but this is peculiarly, I believe, to show that the response of Christianity is to be worthy of God's thoughts of sonship; so it is the Spirit of God's own Son in our hearts.

WMcK Is the Spirit of God's Son special to this dispensation?

AJG Yes, I think so.

FWr Is that why it is put that way, "sent forth his Son," having in mind that God had the great thought of sonship before Him?

AJG I think so, so that it does not say, He sent forth Christ, but He sent forth His Son, so that the idea immediately comes into view; and then "the Spirit of his Son in our hearts." It is wonderful this two-fold sending out, sending forth His Son, and then sending out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

FWr That is what I wondered.

HDT Does it not involve that love is the mainspring behind all the activity that is suggested in it?

AJG It certainly does. And infinite wisdom too, and wonderful grace, because it is really the whole Godhead moving in the matter, is, it not?

HDT Well, it is. But I was thinking of the peculiar affection that is suggested in the term "Son" - and whilst wisdom and grace operate together, I wondered whether the emphasis was very much on love, as being the motive power behind the whole plan.

AJG Well, that must be so, because God is love.

AB Would it be right to say that nothing less than men being before God in sonship would satisfy His heart?

AJG I am sure that would be right, and, therefore, even in the natural order of things God introduces the relationship of father and son, so that men might become accustomed to the idea, in view of God bringing it out in due time as that which was in His mind for man.

FWV His own love, expressed in that way, producing a response that was in accordance with Himself.

AJG Well, exactly. But then in order that the response should really be worthy of God and adequate to satisfy Him, the Spirit takes on that character; the

Spirit of God's Son, so that it is the affections and feelings of God's Son reproduced in our hearts and expressed by us.

HDT So that nothing really depends upon us. Our entrance into these things is by faith, but things really depend upon divine Persons Themselves.

AJG That is exactly what I had in mind, and I believe the Lord is just helping us a little to come to that.

FWK The epistle begins with the thought of the Lord Jesus giving Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God our Father. Would that be in view of sonship, as you were saying?

AJG Yes, it would. So that in Egypt God said, "Israel is my son, my firstborn," Exodus 4: 22. So that He had sonship in mind for His people in redeeming them out of Egypt.

FGH I notice that the cry, "Abba, Father," here is by the Spirit, whereas in Romans the believer cries, "Abba, Father." I think it may help if you would make a remark as to the distinction.

AJG Well, it is important, of course, that it is we ourselves who cry, "Abba, Father," and the Spirit is the power for that, and it is presented in Romans as assuring us in that sense that we are made equal to the position, we are sons by adoption and we have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." So that we come into sonship experimentally, but here it seems to me that it is put in this way, that it is entirely of the Spirit, although it is in our hearts, "the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." I know I have heard it said it is put that way in Galatians because of the poor state of the Galatians, but I think there is more than that in it. It seems to me that it is the thought that the whole position is filled out by the Godhead itself. We come into it in faith, but it is God Himself operating to fill out the whole position.

FGH I was glad to hear you say that.

ACC So Mr. Taylor's remark at Bournemouth that it is the same Spirit that was crying, "Abba, Father," in the Lord, as the Lord was here in sonship, is now crying, "Abba, Father" in the saints.

AJG That is it exactly. And I think it all serves to show how immensely superior Christianity is to anything that went before, and that is what I believe we should be concerned to lay hold of, that we can only really move in it rightly in the Spirit, and hence the great importance that the Spirit is gaining now, because God intends we should come into things really.

AB Would that present the superiority of Christianity, that it really awaited God's own Son to come in to set out the full thought of sonship? "He shall be my son, and I will be his father," 1 Chronicles 22: 10.

AJG Yes, quite so.

AB The Spirit of God's Son is operating in our hearts in order that there might be the same response in character in the saints.

AJG I think it helps to keep in mind that it does require both the coming in of the Son and the coming in of the Spirit.

HDT And as they both come in, it is the guarantee that what was in the divine mind is achieved.

AJG Exactly, and there is no discrepancy between the divine thought as set out in Christ and the perfect answer to it in the saints.

GAL So everything is on the basis of new creation, is it not? That is a very important feature of the truth expressed in this epistle.

AJG Quite so.

JDW Would you say something about the address of "Abba, Father"? Is it the highest form of address to divine Persons?

AJG Well, I think it must be, because it is an address that denotes feeling, I believe, real feeling and affection, being the Lord's own words, and so far as the record goes, words used under the greatest pressure, which would be calculated to bring forth, as it did bring forth, the deepest feelings of the heart of Christ.

DMcI When we are privileged to take up this cry? Are you connecting it with the Supper?

AJG Oh, it is what is there in the Spirit. You cannot limit it to any particular time.

GAL Is it not the normal ground of our relations with God?

AJG It is the normal cry that the Spirit produces.

DMcI Yes. I was only thinking it says, "because ye are sons," that is basic, is it not? God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." It seems to be a collective thought, that is what I had in mind.

AJG Well now you are quoting Romans, "whereby we cry." Here it is "sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." But I think it is regarded as the normal cry of the believer having the Spirit. You may say,

perhaps, we have not taken it on as much as we should have done, and that may be the case, but that is how it is presented; it is the normal way the Spirit in the believer expresses Himself.

WHL Do you think we are sometimes in danger of regarding this as a question of growth, and as something to be reached, whereas, as you say, it is the normal thing for a Christian?

AJG So that even the little children in John's epistle are said to know the Father.

HDT Whilst it is not a matter of attainment, it is the divine mind because it is the time of sonship. I suppose you would have to allow that in soul, history oftentimes the experiences in Romans are gone through until this sense of relationship is really established in our souls.

AJG I think so, but often young souls in the beginning get a taste of it, and then they have to pass through the exercises by which they are brought into the liberty of it in a real way.

GAL Does not the joy of it come in seeing Christ in that position and ourselves in Him? In Romans 8, "there is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus," chapter 1.

AJG Exactly.

FGH Why does it say in verse 7, "Thou art no longer bondman, but son"? Why is it put in the singular there?

AJG Because sonship is an individual matter. It is the persons who are sons, and each one is a son.

AJM Why is the expression, "crying"?

AJG There is feeling in it, there is nothing formal about it. All around us there is formal divine worship, and it is formal, but what God is looking for is worship in spirit and in truth, and that involves feeling.

FWT Would that be an evidence of life and power?

AJG It would, quite so.

HDT Do you think there would be more spiritual fervour if there was a greater recognition of the presence of the Spirit in this capacity?

AJG I am sure of that.

GAL Is that not what comes out in John 4? The Lord says, "ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know," verse 22. One feels that in

Christendom the prayers are to Almighty God, it is all out of the dispensation. "Ye worship ye know not what" covers a great deal of that, whereas here we are brought into direct relations with God by His Spirit as in Christ.

AJG And hence the exercise now of the past few years to urge us to cultivate acquaintance with the Spirit more than we have ever done before, because He will bring us into this liberty. The Spirit is the truth, as we were having yesterday, and we want to arrive at the truth, not exactly from the Scripture, although the Scripture is our safeguard, but, in a sense, we want to arrive at it in the Spirit.

HDT In the knowledge of God, really.

AJG Yes.

FGH I remember a reading in 1908, I think, when Mr. Taylor said that there is no expression that gives God greater pleasure than, "Abba, Father."

AJG I think we can quite believe that, and hence that shows how distinctive this faith period is, that the very same affections, and expression of affections, that came from Christ as Man toward His Father, should now find expression in the saints.

AB In regard of the question of reliance on the Spirit, it says that "God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." That is, would He lead us into what is engaging Him, moving our hearts to the Father, He Himself crying, "Abba, Father"?

AJG Yes, I think so. And it finds its full expression, I suppose, in Christ in the midst of the assembly.

GAL I think it is a very lovely thought that has been referred to. The same blessed Spirit which said that in Christ, says it in us, or cries out in us. It brings us into delightful accord with Christ.

AJG And it is very affecting to see that the Holy Spirit will take on different characters according to the need of the moment or the position at any moment, so that everything that is for the pleasure of God is filled out in the Spirit's power.

HDT I was thinking of Him being in the inside knowledge of all that is in the divine mind, and with the divine capacity to achieve all that amongst the saints. You begin to see how the work of the Spirit is as essential as the work of redemption.

AJG Exactly.

Ques Is the Spirit the answer to faith? Does "Because ye are sons," link with faith, the Spirit coming in in answer to it?

AJG I suppose it would be right to say that. It says, after ye believed ye were sealed. But it is because God's thought in this period of faith, which we come into on the principle of faith, is sonship, and nothing less, and because it is God's intention that it is to be properly filled out, and hence He has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

WMcK Would you be free to say a little regarding the distinction between the thought of children and sons? In Romans 8 the witness of the Spirit is that we are children of God.

AJG In that chapter children and sons are brought very close together in an interesting way, because it says the creation awaits the "revelation of the sons of God," and that it will be brought "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," Romans 8: 19 - 22. So that they are brought very close together. But sons really are what we are before God for His pleasure, and the full thought of sonship requires the glorified condition, the redemption of our bodies. The full thought of sonship, requires that, complete conformity to Christ, so that the place of sonship is heaven, and the condition of sonship is conformity to Christ, but we have the Spirit of it already in our hearts, but it is God-ward and for the pleasure of God, whereas children is more what we are as born of God and down here in testimony to God.

HDT And the objects of His care too.

AJG Quite so.

WMcK I wondered whether, in that sense, the Spirit would help us to understand the care of God as His children. The Spirit of sonship is the liberty we have to enter into the greatest thoughts that He has about us.

AJG Well, quite so. But then I am not sure whether the fact that we are born of God does not underlie every other position that God is pleased to set us in, so that we cannot separate them too rigidly, although there are different ideas connected with them.

GAL Mr. Darby says that sonship is the status which is given to children.

AJG Well, that is good, because it is a gift, a status given, we are not born sons.

HDT And it is on the principle of adoption, is it not?

AJG Quite so.

HDT Whereas Christ was born into the position, which gives Him a unique place.

AJG Quite so.

AWP Would you say that as proceeding from God in this way, it is in view, as you have already said, of divine pleasure and the satisfaction of divine Persons? So the operation proceeds from God with a view of the return to God.

AJG Yes, exactly. It emanates from God and it is all effected through God, and it is all for the pleasure of God.

FWK So would the Spirit, viewed here as taking the initiative sovereignly, be from the divine side in that way, and the truth is presented abstractly, not as taking account of our state?

AJG What did you mean by the Spirit taking the initiative?

FWK He cries, "Abba, Father." It is His cry. I wondered whether it was the Spirit viewed in that way normally taking the initiative. It is not a question of our state, exactly, but the truth presented normally.

AJG It is the truth presented normally, as you say, yet He is in our hearts, so that He is not operating independently of us. He is producing the response from us.

HDT Is it not remarkable that Paul should take this way of presenting the truth at this level, to correct the miserable bondage they were putting themselves under?

AJG Exactly; and hence the great importance of realising the distinctiveness of Christianity, faith having come.

DMcI So that the bondmanship in verse 7 really links up with the bondage that they were putting themselves in.

AJG Yes, it does. They were going back to what was past.

DMcI Not that we are not God's bondmen, but that is not the thought here.

AJG No, it is not.

GAL Is not it interesting in verse 29 of the previous chapter, it says, "if ye are of Christ, then ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise," because that is the great teaching, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Genesis 22: 18? That is Christ - all the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Him.

AJG Quite so. So that you get the two thoughts in Galatians; first of all you get Abraham himself, and then you get Abraham's seed. Abraham setting forth the principle on which we are blessed, the principle of faith, but the seed being Christ in whom we are blessed.

MHT As to faith, does that stand related to our responsibility, in part at least, or is it to be regarded as wholly the gift of God?

AJG I think you have to recognise both sides; that if testimony is presented to us we are responsible to believe. I think you have to recognise that. On the other hand, if you believe you recognise that you would not have believed unless God had given you faith. So the fact is that faith gives all the glory to God. You cannot make yourself believe in one sense, and yet you are responsible to believe, if God presents the testimony to you.

GAL So that it is in Ephesians 2 that faith is spoken of as the gift of God; when one is consciously established according to the purpose of God.

AJG Yes.

MHT Does "the gift of God" there rather refer to the whole thought of salvation being on the principle of grace so far as God is concerned, and on the principle of faith so far as we are concerned.

AJG It is on the principle of faith, so far as we are concerned, and that makes everything of God, but it says, "ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God's gift," Ephesians 2: 8. I think that must refer to faith.

WMcK Does the idea that we are sons by faith in Christ Jesus imply that while we await the full thought, that is the conformity of our bodies to Christ - while we wait for that - we are to be governed by the light of it in our souls now?

AJG It involves that, but I think the great thought is that "ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus," that is to say, this being the time of faith, and sonship being what is in God's mind for man, that is what we come into through faith in Christ Jesus.

HDT So the relationship is already established. The fulness of all that is involved in it awaits another day, but the relationship itself is already here.

AJG Well, quite so.

GAL If I am to see God's thought for me in this dispensation at all, I must see it in Christ glorified. There is nothing less than that in God's mind.

AJG Quite so.

FWT Is this personal faith or faith as a system that has come marking the whole economy?

AJG Well, "faith having come," is, you might say, the system, and it is characteristically a dispensation of faith, but then when it says, "through faith in Christ Jesus," that is my faith and your faith. The way we come into the blessing of the gospel.

ACC So that in principle in receiving the gospel a person really comes into this.

AJG Exactly, nothing less than that in His mind, so that when David was pleased to show kindness to Mephibosheth he said he should sit at the king's table among the king's sons. There was nothing less than that in mind for Mephibosheth.

GAL And that forthwith.

AJG Exactly.

FGH You would hardly present the idea of faith as God's gift in preaching, would you?

AJG No, I would not.

HDT You could tell people that if they have not got it they can ask for it.

AJG Quite so.

MHT "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," Mark 9: 24.

AJG Quite so. I think the intention is that when we come into things on the principle of faith, the Spirit of God would tell us that faith is God's gift, so that there should not be anything we could glory in but God. If we could accredit ourselves with the faith, it would be something we could glory in about ourselves, but the dispensation of faith is that God is in all things to be glorified.

EAS Is that why it says in verse 7, "heirs also through God"?

AJG "Heirs also through God." God not only makes us sons but He gives us the inheritance, too.

HDT Does not Paul insist on the principle of faith right through, you might say, to the acme of his exercises as a spiritual person, as keeping what belongs to man out and bringing what belongs to God in. For he says, "That I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith." It is remarkable that he should bring it in in that particular

passage. Do you think it shows how we tend to bring in something of ourselves unless faith is active to keep it out.

AJG Well, quite so.

GAL Do we not have to understand that Christianity is essentially a matter of what is conferred upon us in grace? Everything we have received is from God and that gratuitously.

AJG And so it says in Romans, "Therefore it is on the principle of faith, that it might be according to grace," Romans 4: 16.

DMcI Could we have a word as to the dual way in which it says, "God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law"?

AJG Well, I suppose "come of woman, come under law" means that He came in a way that would enable Him to take up everything that man was under. We are not all under law, but there were those who were under law, therefore He would come under law to redeem those who were under law, but we were all under the effects of sin and all that the human race is involved in, so He came of woman, truly a man, entering, sin apart, into all that lay upon man, and if some men were under law, then He would also come under law.

DMcI Why is redemption limited to those under law here?

AJG I suppose because the Galatians were putting themselves under law, and therefore the apostle would stress that the Lord had come to redeem those who were under law, that is to lead them out of that position.

DMcI With the great end that we might receive sonship.

HDT Is it not a point in our souls' histories when we really come to the import of the fact that the promise made to Abraham was all that time before the law?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HDT And the giving of the law did not alter it at all.

AJG No, and the promise is purely from God; what He is pleased to announce that He is going to do, and faith can always fall back on that.

HDT Quite so, and has to fall back on it.

GAL It was given to Abraham when he was still a Chaldean idolater - the God of glory gave it.

AJG Yes.

PH Would you say a little more as to this matter of bringing this thought of sonship into the preaching?

AJG We want to give an impression of the grace of God, the true measure of it, so that preachers often preach from Luke 15, and that chapter is not complete until you have got sonship, "This my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found," verse 24. The best robe and the ring and the shoes, all those were for the man who had been in the far country.

- .J. Would you say a few words in relation to the inheritance, the sons being heirs also? Would you open that up a little for us?

AJG I think the apostle is just enlarging on grace; he is not here exactly delineating the inheritance, but he says, "Thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God." That is, he wants to show the Galatians how enriched they are so that they should turn away from what he calls the beggarly elements.

HDT The prodigal son said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." He said it to himself, but it was not the father's thought at all.

AJG It was not at all.

GAL He could not say it when he got into the father's presence.

AJG No, he could not; exactly, because the suggestion, while it might appear humble, conveyed the impression that at least he was worthy to be a hired servant, but that will not do, that does not give *all* the glory to God.

SGM Is it noticeable that it is in Mark, the servant's gospel, that we get the expression, "Abba, Father," and not in the other gospels? I was thinking that there service is on a far higher level than the man in Luke 15. There is a service, but it is a service of sons in all the tender feelings towards the father.

AJG Well, quite so, that is the service is not bondman service, the service of God is characterised by sonship, so that Mark's gospel starts with "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God." Before He is introduced as Servant, He is presented as Son of God.

JWG Do you think that the reference to the preaching of the gospel would involve that you move forward with the consciousness of sonship in your soul?

AJG I think so.

HDT But you cannot present that if you are not enjoying it yourself.

AJG No; you cannot.

GAL And yet if we do not present it, we fall short of the full thought and preach something less than the full thought of the dispensation.

AJG I was thinking in relation to Ephesians 3; it is a scripture which we often dwell upon, but we get the Spirit brought in here in order to fill out the thoughts of God regarding the assembly, but brought in in the character of the Father's Spirit, so that the Christ might dwell, through faith, in our hearts, and that we might be able fully to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height. That is to say, the Spirit as the Spirit of God's Son capacitates us to respond to the Father suitably in affections and feelings of Christ, but now the Spirit as the Father's Spirit, enables us to enter sympathetically, you might say, into His own thoughts and outlook; His own appreciation of the Christ, and His own outlook upon the whole extent of glory which He is bringing in.

GAL That is delightful, because when the Lord Jesus was here, He had to say, "No one knows the Son but the Father," Matthew 11: 27. So that it is delightful that we are brought in by the Father's Spirit to understand something of the glorious excellence of Christ.

AJG Well, quite so, it is the Christ. It is Christ, not of course in His essential Person, although we know who He is essentially, but it is Christ in relation to the whole scheme of glory which God has devised, involving many families.

HDT You might say, the whole divine universe.

AJG Yes, exactly.

HDT I have often thought that in our pleasure in thinking of the assembly and Christ's relationship with it, we may almost unconsciously become a little selfish. Paul here is thinking of Christ in relation to the whole realm.

AJG Exactly, because he is not expatiating exactly on the blessings of the church, he is expatiating on the greatness and blessedness of God which should be the theme of the praises of the assembly.

GAN So we have four dimensions here, giving us the universe, breadth, length, depth and height; and you might say, Christ fills it all.

DMcI Why does he begin by saying, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts?"

AJG Well, because we begin at the centre, I think, and if the Christ, that is Christ in relation to the whole system of glory, is dwelling in our hearts, then we do not find it very difficult to get an impression of the system itself. But He is to dwell in our hearts, because the assembly is united to Him, so that as Mr.

Raven used to say, It is something like a husband who is absent. He dwells in the heart of his wife, because she is his wife, and all the husband's interests are in her heart. That is the idea, that the Christ is in the assembly's heart, because we are united to Him and, therefore, the whole system which centres in Christ, becomes known to us. So we are not selfish, we are not thinking only of the assembly's portion, but we are thinking of the whole system of which Christ is the Head.

HDT Do you think there is a link between the Scripture you were speaking of last night in John 14, "ye believe on God, believe also on me"? Do you think that is rather Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith?

AJG I do; I have often thought that.

HDT And "every family" would correspond somewhat to the many abodes, and then the particular place the assembly has is indicated in the words that follow.

AJG Quite so.

GAL After all, John 14 gives us the Father's house, which goes into eternity. We are very near to what is eternal here, are we not?

AJG We are.

WMcK Would the Father's Spirit give effect to what the Lord Jesus says in the last verse of John 17? He says, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."

AJG Yes, I think so. That is a wonderful thing, that the love wherewith the Father loves Christ, should be in us. It is not there what we get earlier in John 17, "that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me," (verse 23), but it is that the Father's love for Christ should be in us, that we are capacitated in some way to love Christ as the Father loves Him, and we can understand that that is possible in the power of the Father's Spirit, that we share in the Father's own outlook upon Christ. It shows how near to God God is pleased to bring us, so that we can share with Him in His chiefest joys.

AWP Is it from this standpoint that we are able to take account of the whole compass of what God is doing, as we appreciate the unique place that the assembly has in Christ's affection.

AJG I think it is.

HDT I would like to ask, if it would not be diverting, whether you do not get two thoughts of access? One in chapter 2, "through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father" (verse 18) and then in chapter 3, "according to the

purpose of the ages, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access in confidence by faith of him," verse 11 - 13. Is that not entrance into the divine realm, including the whole extent of what God is going to secure for eternity.

AJG Well, I should think so.

HDT I wondered whether it would just enlarge us a little, it would not minimise in our minds the particular place the assembly has, but it would make us think that God has many interests and Christ is the Centre of them all.

AJG I think so, and it would enlarge our thoughts of God and that is to be the great thing, I think, that the assembly is to be enlarged in its apprehension of God, so that the final note in this chapter is "To him," that is to God, "be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus."

JI Paul declared the whole counsel of God to the Ephesians. Does that include the assembly?

AJG It cannot be limited to that. It is the *whole* counsel of God, and the thought is that we are to become fully intelligent, which is a feature that marks sons, so that in chapter 1 it says he has marked us out for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself and "taken us into favour in the beloved." Then it says, "according to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence." So that sonship is not simply marked by affection or dignity or liberty, but also by intelligence. The assembly, or those who form the assembly, are to be made intelligent in all God's thoughts that He has brought within the range of the creature.

GAD So that every form of activity that pertains to God is a matter of great interest to one who is in the position of sonship.

AJG Yes, it is.

GAL And it seems to me that from the point of view of sonship, every feature of divine operations may become a theme for worship.

AJG Yes, I think so. Indeed that is what God has in mind in sonship. So that in the creation the sons of God shouted for joy, everything that God was doing calls forth an answer from sons.

HDT Do you think that as the dispensation draws to a close, the more we enjoy the assembly's distinctive place the more we shall be free to think of what is coming on, and the interests that God has, and what He is about to

accomplish on the earth? The world to come and a great many other things that we do not often think much about, may loom more largely in our minds.

AJG I think so. You might ask yourself, why is God pleased to have two spheres, heavens and earth, in eternity, and why is He pleased to have many families? It may be we cannot answer those questions, but at any rate we are impressed in creation around us that He loves great variety, an infinite number of gradations of life, characters of life too, and so in the spiritual sphere we are to be enlarged in our thoughts as to God.

GAL So you may approach the prophetic Scriptures from the point of view of sonship, and they have an added lustre and glory because of the God who is so moving.

AB Is that why Paul refers to bowing his knees to the Father and then the reference to the many families? Is he impressed with the greatness of the Father's affections?

AJG I think so. And I think He is casting us upon the Spirit as the Father's Spirit, that is to say, Paul is not attempting to open these things out to us, and tell us about them, he is really casting us on the Spirit, the Father's Spirit, and you might say, urging us to bow our knees and pray on these lines, because it is in the power of the Father's Spirit that we shall begin to get some concrete understanding of these things of which we are speaking.

FGH Before we close, would you say a word as to the last part of verse 19, "that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God"? What do we understand by the fulness of God, and being filled to it?

AJG Well, I suppose the fulness of God is the way that God is known. That is, it is the way God has come out in expression. There is that about God, of course, which the creature can never know, but there is the way He has come out within the range of the creature and what He capacitates the creature to know, and, I suppose, it is involved in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. So that when we are brought into these things in some degree, we apprehend the Father as supreme in the economy, and that Name giving character to all, but we also apprehend the part that has been taken by the Son and is filled by the Son, and the part taken by the Spirit and that is filled by the Spirit; so that you are in the presence, it seems to me, of the fulness of God, and you are, to some extent, made equal to it. I do not know that one can say very much about it, but the fulness of God, it seems to me, is love in the wondrousness of its actings, adapting itself to the creature and adapting the creature to it.

HDT Would you think that it would be just to say that in the economy the Father is presented as the Source of all; the Lord Jesus, the Son, as the expression of all; and the Spirit of God as the Power for all? So that the thing is filled out substantially in result for God Himself.

AJG Well, exactly. I think it is that, that God is to be before our hearts.

THE MOVEMENTS OF CHRIST

John 13:1-11; John 13:31-38; John 14:1-3

A. J. Gardiner I wish, dear brethren, to direct your attention to the movements of Christ as they are set before us in this passage, involving love to His own and love to God, believing that, as we are impressed with these movements and rightly affected by them, it will work out in the strengthening of our position here in testimony and also in increased freshness and substance in the service of God.

We are greatly privileged in that at the present time the testimony is entrusted to us, in the charge of the Holy Spirit, and the service of God, is also, you might say, entrusted to us, although it is in the hands of the Lord Jesus as the Minister of the sanctuary, and also in the hands of the Holy Spirit. But I mean it is a great privilege to realise that to us who are but men, God's creatures, He is pleased to give this double privilege of being in a world of evil in the maintenance of the true expression of Himself, and also of affording Him pleasure unceasingly as ministering to His heart.

Very great issues were raised by the introduction of sin into the universe, and God has been pleased to take up the issues that were raised and to solve them in man. Man has been from the very outset the object of His thoughts, the object of the purposes of His love; and sin having come in and having constituted a challenge to His rights, and the lie that the serpent introduced having involved a question as to whether God is really good. God has been pleased to take up the challenge and intends to meet it in man. He is not meeting it in angels; the angels that have fallen are being reserved for judgment;

but He is pleased to meet the challenge and take it up and solve every issue that is raised in man. Primarily, of course, He solves these issues in Christ, as we shall see, but then they are also to be worked out in the power of the Holy Spirit in the saints.

Now in this chapter 13 the Lord contemplates that He is about to depart out of the world to the Father. There is a striking majesty about the movements of Christ as we have them presented to us in John's gospel. He is not presented as being slain and cast out, He is presented as departing out of the world to the Father, and departing at the right time. Nothing that man could do could alter the time. The time had come, His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father. So that as we follow the movements of Christ in the gospel of John we are impressed with the wondrous deliberateness in all

those movements; the whole matter being in the divine mind and being carried out steadily by the Lord Jesus without being deflected or hindered; all is done perfectly and to time. But now the time having come when He should depart out of the world to the Father. He has in view His own who are to be left in the world. That is a very touching thing for us to remember, for the Lord has been in this very world and knows its character, and what its influences are and how active Satan is; and knowing all about it He takes account of His own, as He calls us, who should be in the world, and takes occasion, as it says, to love them to the end. Not that He had not always loved His own, but it is as though the Spirit of God would impress us with the sense that in view of the position which was to arise by reason of His departing out of the world and His own being left in the world, He set Himself deliberately to love them to the end.

Hence that is one thing, dear brethren, that we can always rely upon, the love of Christ. As Paul says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul proved it in a remarkable degree that nothing and no one could separate him from the love of Christ. That is something for us to take account of, that whatever arises we may rely on the faithfulness and the power and the service of the love of Christ, because another thing comes into view and that is that Satan is very near. It is a feature of this chapter that the devil is near; he had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariote, one of the twelve, to betray the Lord. He was there present on this occasion, one of the twelve, with that thought in his heart, put there by the devil, that he should betray the Lord; and later on in the chapter the devil enters into him.

So we are reminded that that is the situation, the Lord departing out of the world, His own left *in* the world and the devil very near and very active; and the sorrowful thing is that there should be one of those who outwardly belonged to Christ - he was not a real disciple though he had that position - that there should be one who opened his heart to the devil. We are told in the previous chapter what the secret was; we are told that Judas was a thief and had the bag and carried what was put in it; and therefore for a trifling sum of money, covetousness having taken possession of his heart, he was prepared to betray the Son of God. It shows how watchful we need to be that we should not allow in our hearts the beginnings of anything that is contrary to the truth, because in the measure in which we do we are exposing ourselves to the attack of the devil. Let us not forget that the devil is near and that he is bent upon spoiling, if he can, and to what extent he can, what is of God down here, and that we expose ourselves to his attack if we allow in our hearts or minds anything that is contrary to the truth. Hence the very beginnings of things are to be judged if we would be preserved, as it says in the epistle of John, "He

that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."

So the devil was near, and it says that, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God." How much is comprised in those few words! He came out from God in order to bring God out in full declaration and to bring out all that was in the mind of God to establish in the way of blessing; and He was going to God. First He must lay the basis for everything in His death, but all is put in that wonderful way that one of the Godhead had come in in manhood, going through with every thought of the blessed God, and He was going to carry everything right through and secure the full answer to all that God had purposed in His love. He came from God and was going to God, and He was in the full consciousness of that, and in the full consciousness, too, that the Father had given Him all things into His hands. Being fully conscious of that, with all the moral glory that attaches to One to whom such great things are committed, He "rises from supper and lays aside his garments, and having taken a linen towel he girded himself." He had in mind, as we know well, to set an example of how love acts; He had in mind that an example of love in its actings, and not merely as an abstraction, should be left in the company of His own, and be impressed upon every one who was present. Only eleven were impressionable, but the Lord intended that all the eleven who were impressionable should take on the impression of love in the way it acts as He was now setting before them. I need not say that everything that Jesus did is enhanced by the glory of His Person. So that it says at the end of John's gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written." They were all of such value that they were worthy to be written one by one; but written books are not capable, they are not sufficient, the world itself could not contain the books that should be written if all the things that Jesus did were written one by one. There was a moral glory attaching to every one of them. But in the assembly, the body of Christ, the things that Jesus did are now being repeated, you might say, are now being worked out under His own influence in those who are the members of His body; so that the whole assembly, the body in its entirety, is the vessel in which the things that Jesus did in the moral glory of them will appear in a coming day.

So, as I was saying, everything that Jesus did was enhanced by the glory of the One who did them, and here there is the expression and the example of serving love. No one is asked to get things ready for Him, no one is too unimportant to be served by Him; He does everything Himself and does it in

the conscious dignity of His Person and of all that was entrusted to Him. He rises from supper, He lays aside His garments, as though to divest Himself of anything that would attach official importance to Him, He takes a linen towel. "He rises from supper and lays aside his garments, and having taken a linen towel He girded himself," that is, He deliberately assumed a bondman's service, "Then he pours water into the wash-hand basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded." There can be no doubt that He went round the whole circle. It says, "He comes therefore to Simon Peter"; there is nothing to suggest that He went directly and immediately to Simon Peter; in the course of going round the circle He comes to Simon Peter, and at the end it says, "When therefore, he had washed *their* feet."

So that we are to gather that He went round the whole circle, every one of His own receiving this personal service from the Lord Himself. But what has all this in mind? It has in mind, dear brethren, that we should learn love in its practical working and in its impartiality, love that takes account of every one in the circle. We were saying this afternoon that the working out of love is largely left to the localities. Of course, wherever we meet the saints they are an object of love to us and can be served in love; but the practical working out and development of love amongst ourselves really in the last resort works out in the local company, and this is to instruct us that everyone is to be regarded as an object of care and worthy to be served. The one who washes the feet goes down lower than all. What a help this will be in the conditions locally, dear brethren, if we begin to take on this spirit that has been set out in Jesus, "Least of all," as it says elsewhere, "and servant of all." There is plenty of room for such; there is not much room for those who desire to be something, like Simon Magus who gave out that he was some great one. There is plenty of room for any of us if we are prepared to be least of all and servant of all; and that attitude of mind and the service that results from it have been dignified by being exemplified in the Son of God.

I do not know that I need enlarge further on this. The Spirit of God records the incident through John and he records it in great detail. I think we may assume that John, as we may say, was spellbound as he saw the Lord moving in this wonderful way, because every movement of His is recorded; how He rises from supper and how He lays aside His garments and how He took a linen towel and how He girded Himself and how He poured water into a wash-hand basin and how He began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded, and how He took again His garments; all is recorded. If we had been recording it, the probability is that we would not have recorded all these details; but every detail has its value as

we see who it was who was moving in this way. He was not asking anyone to do part of the labour. He was doing it all Himself and the least of the twelve was equally served as much as the greatest.

So He tells us what He has in mind. He says, "Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am so. If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also." That is, He is setting in motion this great idea of love amongst ourselves and showing that it is not to be a theory but it is to work out in actual expression, and the expression of it is in love that serves. Just as Abigail, to whom we have often referred, when she heard that she was to become the wife of David in his rejection, said, "Behold, let thy handmaid be a bondwoman to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." She understood that the time of David's rejection was a time when those who were with him would need refreshing, and she was content to take her place as a bondwoman, having no aspirations beyond that that she should be privileged to wash the feet of the servants of her Lord.

Now Peter objects, as we know. In this chapter Peter is twice in the wrong simply because he had himself before him; either mock-humility, saying, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," or else self-importance saying "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now"? It is astonishing - let everyone allow his own heart to bear testimony - how much self intrudes itself in our thoughts and exercises, and this chapter shows how self can be a real hindrance to the entrance upon the thoughts of God. So the Lord answers Peter's objections by saying, "Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me." Who raised the suggestion about part with Christ? It did not come from Peter; it did not come, as far as we know, from John; it did not come from anyone but the Lord Himself. He has that in mind in His service toward us in love, that we should have part with Himself. There is scarcely anything more affecting than that. John seems to have taken on the idea, for later on in the chapter he is seen in the bosom of Jesus; he understands that the Lord wants him to be near Him, not active in service, but near the Lord. Service has its due place with those to whom it is given to serve, but service that love dictates is open to anyone, and real service proceeds from nearness to Christ. So John understands something of what was in the Lord's mind when He alludes to "part with me," so we find him in the bosom of Jesus.

Now I pass on to verses 31 and 32. The first passage that I have been dwelling on has in mind that we should be really marked by love amongst ourselves, and that is an important feature as strengthening the position of testimony. It says, "Jerusalem ... is a city that is compact together," Psalm 122:

3. If the saints are moving together in the love that is learned from Christ, the enemy will find it very difficult to get in, and hence the great importance of this idea of being compact together in our several localities, because there is nothing that will so keep the enemy out as the saints being truly together. The service of love begets confidence, and confidence begets openness, and the more love is in activity the more there are conditions in which Satan finds it difficult to get in. So love will be always on the watch also, as we were having this afternoon, "If any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask." Love has its eyes open and love, you might say, has its knees ready. "If any one sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask." So that love is always ready to take up the cause of anyone who for the moment appears to have come under the influence of evil.

So as I was saying, this great thought of love amongst ourselves is an important element in the strengthening of the position here in testimony. But now we come to these verses 31 and 32, and the Lord says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." This, you might say, is the central point of two eternities, if one may use the expression. That is, speaking according to human ways of expression, time is an interlude or interval between eternity that has gone before and eternity that is to follow. I realise that it is a human way of expression, but Scripture speaks of "from eternity to eternity." But here the cross is in view and it is the central point of everything - the cross. Behind the cross lies the marvel of the incarnation, but the cross is the great point at which every issue raised by the introduction of sin has been solved according to God, and in addition love has come out in glorious expression there. It is the glory of the Son of man that God has been glorified; as I was saying earlier, the issues that have been raised by the introduction of sin God has taken up in man, but it is in the Son of man; it is in the Son of man primarily that they are taken up, and only by the Son of Man could all that was effected at the cross be effected.

So the Lord is speaking of the cross. The moment had now come, it was immediately before His spirit. Not exactly the sorrow of it; we get a suggestion of Gethsemane, the nearest approach to it in this gospel, in chapter 12, where He says, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." How good it is to follow the movements of Christ and the words of Jesus, to see the motives that impelled Him in His service. "Father, glorify thy name." There was one Man come forth in Jesus whose one thought was that God should be glorified, that every challenge that had been raised by the introduction of sin should be fully met and in result God should remain supreme in the affections of His creature. And now the time had come for this

to be done. Sin had come in, the creature upon whom God had set His heart had become estranged from Him, it looked as though the devil had won the day. And now there is this wonderful movement on the part of the Son of man, and at the cross sin is judged according to divine standards of holiness. What a wonderful thing that is! Not judged in those who were sinners but judged in the Person of the Son of man, as it says in another scripture, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us." Is it possible to fathom it? We may, at any rate, contemplate it. It gives us an impression of the wonderful way in which every issue raised by the introduction of sin has been met by God Himself in the Person of His Son, but it involved infinite cost for Christ and for God too.

But now the time had come for it to be done, and it was the glory of the Son of man that He should do it. Sin was judged in a most absolute way; all that was due to God was met and His throne and nature abundantly vindicated, and at the same time a way cleared, by this wonderful road that love has taken, whereby we might be saved. It is a question not only of holiness being vindicated but of love being expressed, as the hymn puts it.

"Love, that on death's dark vale
Its sweetest odours spread;
Where sin o'er all seemed to prevail,
Redemption's glory shed." (235:4)

What a glory it is, the glory of God! The way that He is able to meet *any* situation and does it consistently with Himself, and shines out in a glory that was never known before, the glory of love in redemption. But Jesus was needed if it was to be done, and so it says, "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him." And therefore, in the light of the cross of Christ we become affected more and more by love. It is not only the way that Christ serves us that impresses us, according to the first part of the chapter, but we become affected by the wondrousness of love in redemption, and at the same time we get a wonderful standard, a perfect standard of holiness. We learn to judge sin as God has judged it, but we learn to rejoice in the love that has found a way of saving us and making us suitable to itself. It involves not only redemption but the gift of the Spirit.

But here the Lord is speaking about this moment of the cross. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself," that is, as I understand it, in God; the Lord Jesus is not for the moment glorified publicly but He has been exalted to the right hand of God and God is for the moment keeping Him out of sight. The

moment for His public glory is coming soon, but He is glorified in God, He has not had to wait for that. Now that being accomplished, God is left free to open up what He has had in His mind all along from before the foundation of the world.

So we find the Lord is moving still; He moved to exemplify love amongst His own. He moved in His thoughts to the cross, and now He speaks of further movement. He says, "Ye shall seek me; and, as I said to the Jews, Where I go ye cannot come, I say to you also now." Now Simon Peter again intervenes and says, "Lord, where goest thou?" and Jesus says, "Where I go thou canst not follow me now,

but thou shalt follow me *after*." That is, the Lord must go first. In the first part of the chapter Peter has to learn that he must allow the Lord to serve him, he must allow the Lord to set the example of love; but now he is to learn that the Lord must go first; he is to follow after, as we all are, but the Lord must go first, and we will learn our place as we follow the Lord in His movements. Peter says, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee." Full of himself, full of self-importance, even occupied with his devotedness to Christ! What a snare self is! The only thing that will eclipse self is Christ, and the Spirit of God is given us to that end that self should be eclipsed by the appreciation of Christ. So the Lord has to say to Peter, "Thou wilt lay down thy life for me! Verily, verily, I say to thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." What a lesson Peter had to learn! What lessons we all have to learn! Believers have to learn what the heart is capable of, what self-confidence will lead to, what boastfulness will lead to. All these things have to be learnt, and why do they have to be learned? In order that we should have no confidence in ourselves, as Paul says, in the epistle to the Philippians, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" - no room for the flesh at all. We "worship by the Spirit of God," God is before us in His blessedness, the power for the worship being the Spirit of God, and we boast in Christ Jesus, the Man of God's choice, and we have no confidence in the flesh, and that is the happy portion of the believer. So Peter has to learn it, he has to learn what he is in his own untrustworthiness; but the result of it is that he will learn to appreciate Christ more, and learn to appreciate the Spirit more, and learn to fill out the rest of his time here in distrust of self and in confidence in the Lord and in the Spirit. That is the secret of soul prosperity, dear brethren, the measure in which we can be maintained in the distrust of ourselves but in confidence in Christ and in the Spirit.

So all this is intended to provide substance in our souls as we increase in the knowledge of God; God Himself is to be the object before our hearts, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I believe God is making Himself indispensable to us, and intends to; He intends all the exercises connected with our position here in testimony, and all the exercises that arise in connection with filling out the position of the service of God acceptably in the assembly, to make God Himself, the Father and the Son and the Spirit, indispensable to us, that there should be no room for ourselves; yet it is ourselves having part in these wonderful things in the liberty of sonship, but it is intended that we should be shut up to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, that we should be satisfied with God. And the more we learn God, the more there will be real power for worship in the assembly.

Now the ground being cleared, according to what the Lord says in verses 31 and 32, the Lord is now free to open out what is connected with the Father's purpose. So He says, "Let not your heart be troubled." It is as though the whole position has been met and we can now rest, so to speak, in God and in Christ, and in the Spirit too, for what we have to learn as to ourselves does not in any sense affect what it is that God is bringing in now, and to which we are called. So the Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me." That is, Christ Himself is now to be kept steadily before our hearts. As we were having this afternoon, that is God's *commandment* that we believe on the name of His Son. Jesus Christ, all the renown that attaches to Him as the One who has come forth from God, Who has accomplished redemption, and now has gone back to God. All that is to be before our hearts, and the Lord says, "Believe also on me." That is, He is now presenting Himself in the new position He was taking up in the Father's presence as an object by which our hearts are to be held. "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you." The Lord says just sufficient to show us that there is great expansiveness, wonderful extent in the realm of God's purpose and of the Father's pleasure. He says, "Many abodes," but He does not proceed to say anything more about them, but just tells us there are many. Then He concentrates on the one abode. He says, "I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be." There are two things in those words of the Lord's dear brethren; one is the distinctiveness of the place, and that is that it is where He is we are to be; and the other is the personal love of Christ, that He is coming again to receive us to Himself. Those are the two things, things that we know well, things that are easy to say, but things that we might well carry in our hearts, let the impress of them deepen with us, that there is a distinctive place prepared for

those of the assembly. It is purely of divine sovereignty that it is so; you might say, it seems extraordinary that we should have a better place than Abraham, or than Moses, or than Daniel, or some of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament, but so it is. But that is just God's sovereignty, and we are to be impressed with grace and the wonderfulness of the sovereignty of love, that He is pleased to give to those called in this dispensation to be the body of Christ, the object of the love of Christ, the family which is to be where Christ is. No other family has that position. Every family will have its own appointed place as ordered of the Father, but our place is that "Where I am ye may be also." The Lord would have the sense of it sink into our hearts. Then the sense, too, that there is His present love, "I am coming again." That is as though the thing is present to His mind, as though it might take place today, or now. The Lord says, "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be." But now as we get the sense of that, dear brethren, what is the result? It is all intended to work out in the greatest liberty and joy and fulness of response to the blessed God.

The Lord does not present Himself as supreme in relation to this. He says, "My *Father's* house"; He is directing attention to His Father, as He says later on in this chapter, "My Father is greater than I." He presents the Father as the great source of all these great thoughts of love. He is the One Himself who effectuates them, and the Spirit makes it good in us and gives us power to enter into them and move in them in the liberty that is proper to us; but the great source of all is the Father, God known in the blessedness of that name as Father. So, as our thoughts and hearts come under the impress of these things, as we learn them in the movements of Christ, we become freshly impressed with the wondrous grace in which God is known by us at the present time. Not now grace connected with the meeting of need, though great grace has been called into activity in the doing of that, but grace that is pleased to give His creature man *such a place* in nearness to Himself, in union with Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is as though we are embraced in God; it is a question of God and the blessedness of God and love that is in God in designing these things and bringing them to pass so that we might have our part through grace in the response to the blessed God that has moved in this way.

These things are to be learned in the movements of Christ, the first movement that I have sought to speak of being to impress us with love amongst ourselves, that we may learn how it acts; then the subsequent movements impressing us with the divine glory first meeting every issue that is raised, then going steadily forward and accomplishing its own thoughts in this

glorious Man who is in the Father's presence and whose love for the assembly is this, that He says, "I am coming again ... that where I am ye also may be."

May the Lord help us to follow these movements. What I have said is well known to us all and a simple line, but it is well that we should become impressed with the glory of the movements of Christ, and take time to consider them and follow them in our hearts, and as we do I think we shall become a little more impressed with the blessedness of divine glory.

THE SERVICE OF SONG

1 Chronicles 16: 4; Habakkuk 3: 17 - 19; Isaiah 38: 19, 20

H. D. Thomas It may be appropriate, dear brethren, at this juncture to be reminded of the service of song, particularly in what is suggested in the Old Testament by "instruments of music," that is, we may say, organised singing. There are songs in the Scriptures which appear to be spontaneous, composed in certain circumstances and expressed, and once expressed they remain in the treasury of the saints. But it is evident that, under David's regime, and subsequently, there was a certain ordered service, and we are reminded of that in our exercises as to the new hymn book.

The word used for 'instruments of music' is very often translated "vessel," which is a suggestion, not only of ability, but of capacity and substance. So that we are faced with this, dear brethren, that whilst thankful to God for divinely given ability to write new hymns, thankful too for the services of those who are moving the matter forward and praying too for those upon whom the very heavy task of translation falls, we are confronted with this fact that putting these beautiful sentiments into the hymn book does not put them into our souls. What is expressed is to be the outcome of our knowledge of God. There is, of course, such a thing as getting into the current of the Spirit and being taken further than our normal capacity. I am sure we all know that. But, on the other hand, we may refer to these three men - Asaph, Habakkuk and Hezekiah - as those who learnt how to praise by the experiences through which they passed. There is something about experience, dear brethren, that in a certain sense is unique. We tend to be academic, so God sees to it that we are passed through matters under His hand which are used for our education, so that we acquire things substantially, and, moreover, there develops amongst us a certain spiritual affinity. I have noticed that Scripture tells us quite a bit about the three men to whom I refer, and it would be found, if this is examined, that they, though in different circumstances, learned very much the same lessons. I would commend that to the brethren, that similarity is not achieved by the insistence on mere outward uniformity but by learning how to go on with God. He has the whole matter in hand. The wonderful structure of the assembly, dear brethren, baffles the most astute human mind, if we think for a moment of what is involved in Christ having His bride, having the assembly, in the midst of which He sings God's praises. If you think of the extensiveness of the work, including every blood-bought saint from Pentecost to the rapture who has the Spirit, and all fitted in and made to coordinate, all having their own personality, all having their own individuality, and yet all linked together in an organism that finds its impulse from Christ in

the power of the Spirit and shall yield to the Persons of the Godhead all that They desire for eternity. The magnitude of the matter, dear brethren, lifts us out of anything that is small or paltry and makes us understand what a work God has put His hand to. The assembly is made up of persons and we have histories, and I thought perhaps it might be profitable to refer briefly to these three men. I confess that I have Hezekiah mainly on my mind, and I was a little confirmed in it by our brother's subject, because he is presented - indeed, as the others are - as being figurative of those who are in the enjoyment of eternal life, that is, in the knowledge of God; not that they knew it as we know it now, Jesus having become a Man, but then there were certain foreshadowings, dear brethren, and that makes the Old Testament so interesting.

When David appointed certain of the Levites to celebrate and to thank and to praise Jehovah we are told, without any explanation, that Asaph was the chief. No one seems to have quarrelled with it, for he carried his own moral qualifications and, where Christ is supreme, as typified in the ark coming into its place in the tent which David had spread for it, there is an elimination of rivalry amongst the brethren. Nothing is likely to exclude party faction more than the supremacy of Christ amongst the saints. David's service at that time was to make the ark supreme, the result of the ark being brought into its place being that God was served and the saints were blessed. But this result was not to pass away with the occasion. David made provision that God's portion was to be rendered to Him as the duty of every day required. Whilst we are very much concerned about the assembly singing, it may be that we are not so concerned about our ability to sing constitutionally. Now, as regards Asaph, the chief, if we read through the Psalms he wrote we shall find the exercises of the man that led David to give him that position. At the start he had a good deal of query. That should encourage us. Sometimes we hide our queries from ourselves, but it is far better to have to do with God about them. Asaph was very concerned because he saw the wicked prospering. He looked around in the world and found all things awry. Is it not so today? It surely is! He says, "As for me ... truly have I purified my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency: for all the day have I been plagued and chastened every morning," Psalm 73. He almost says, dear brethren, 'I am having too much of my share of discipline.' Never so! In the divine realm all is measured, all is calculated, all is weighed accurately before it is allowed to fall. The hand of One who loves us, dear brethren, is above all. The poise that entered into creation enters into the care of the soul, and if we get to do with God, we find that there is always some mitigating thing. 'In saddest skies, some silver gleam,' and in the most trying circumstances some tenderness, and in the

thing that seems so bitter something that reminds us of the sweetness of the knowledge of God. So we find these things, dear brethren. Asaph found them; and where did he find them? He found them in the sanctuary. He says, "Until I went into the sanctuaries of God ... " Psalm 73: 17. It is there everything is seen in right perspective, and he comes to the conclusion, "As for me, it is good for me to draw near to God," verse 28. It may seem a very simple thing to say, but I believe constitutionally our ability to sing lies in our knowledge of God, and we never learn Him at a distance. There are a good many young people here, I perceive. God often follows us very carefully, even though we may drift; but real progress of soul is made when we draw near to God. There is such a thing as *deliberately* drawing near to God. I believe we are to be taught how to do it. The Lord, in speaking of prayer, says, "enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door ... " Matthew 6: 6. It is not just finding a second when you can; there is deliberation in it. Draw near! - and we have a promise that, as we draw near to God. He will draw near to us; James 4: 8. It is in these things we see the making of the man and he is a most interesting subject.

The way Asaph recurs in different parts of scripture is noticeable. In the historical books, David and Solomon are often referred to for the simple reason that they are types of Christ. But Asaph is often linked with them and he is not a type of Christ but a type of the product of the ministry of David and Solomon; he is one of ourselves in that sense, and he goes through; for in practically every revival in Judah you will find his progeny have their place in the service of God in song. What we are saying about him makes him an important man to us. You will remember he tells us where promotion comes from; it says it comes "not from the east nor from the west, nor yet from the south," Psalm 75: 6. By inference it comes from the north as has been often remarked, involving discipline, but only as accepted from the hand of God. "For God is the judge; he putteth down one and exalteth another," verse 7. What does that mean? It does not merely mean one brother being passed over and another one exalted - it may mean that, and sometimes it does - but I would suggest it is more what we were having today, that God, by His handling of our souls, is putting down one order of things and building up another order of things. Jesus came here not to perpetuate the situation but to end it and to bring about something that is going into eternity because it is fit for eternity. What a wonderful thing, dear brethren, to understand that every particle of work in our souls belongs to that realm in which God is operating. The world has no right to it; it does not belong there. We are not of the world as Christ is not of the world. We can afford to leave this poor scene behind us in our thoughts and aspirations and hopes, and take on something

in our souls that belongs to another world, and the Spirit is called "the earnest of our inheritance." We have *Him* now.

The brethren will remember that, whilst Asaph went through his individual exercises and seems to have learned in a certain measure of solitariness, yet on the other hand he (of all people!) recounts God's goodness to His people as a nation. He speaks of the long journey through the wilderness and what God was to His saints. He speaks of God's way being in the sanctuary and also in the sea: "thy paths are in the great waters and thy footsteps are not known" (Psalm 77: 19), as if he has given up trying to explain everything to himself and is just in the quiet submission to God's will, and he comes to the conclusion that God was leading His people as He had before, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. What a wonderful thing, dear brethren! One thinks of the scripture which has engaged us today, one upon which my heart has often rested, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand," John 3: 35. The heart finds peculiar rest in thinking that God in Christ has one blessed Man to whom He has committed everything. Not one thing will fail. I suppose the greatest thing that was ever committed to Christ was the work of redemption. But think of all the rest! The more we think of it, the greater Jesus becomes to us. The Son of God - how competent He is! What hands are His! - they will never fail. Moses knew it: "all his saints are in thy hand," Deuteronomy 33: 3. There we are, and we might as well stay there! He will do the best for us. He led them by the hand of Moses and Aaron and these typify Jesus who is made Lord and Christ. We learn to submit to His authority and we learn to benefit by the support He alone can give. We often lean upon one another but sometimes we arrive at a stage when there is no one to lean upon but Christ, and He will never fail.

Now all that enters into the constitution of a man who has his part in relation to stringed instruments. Indeed, in this chapter they are called musical instruments of God. Asaph has a responsible place in this matter for he had learned in this well-worn road of the discipline of God. So we are to continue with our eye on another Man in another place, and as we do so our path through this world is simplified because we have another world before us. Also we find we acquire the ability to have our part with the saints in the service of God in song, for the discipline of God never makes one doleful. "No chastening at the time seems to be of joy, but of grief," Hebrews 12: 11. If God is humbling us, we want to be humbled - I fully admit that - but, on the other hand, dear brethren, you will find that, as soon as anything is accepted from the hand of God there is a sense that good is intended and good comes. God is good and He does good; and it is the way to keep the enemy out of our minds and out of our circumstances and out of our outlook so that we are free

to have our part in what is being yielded now in the assembly. Think of it, dear brethren! - made up of persons like ourselves. We sometimes think of the assembly in its greatness and grandeur, and we get an almost grotesque idea of it. But then, to soberly reflect in the power of the Spirit, it is made up of persons like ourselves, every one for whom Jesus laid down His life, as we had before us this afternoon. I suppose the flock is the most elementary figure of the collective position. The assembly perhaps sometimes conveys something a little more official. We graduate to higher levels of the truth by coming into the flock in attachment to the One who has died for us; it is intended that Jesus should have a unique place in our hearts as the One who laid down His life for us. Moreover, as I look at my brother, he is the one for whom Christ died. So that, not only is there attachment between the sheep and the Shepherd, but also to one another. So, dear brethren, no doubt as the Lord helps our brother as he serves us these three days, further things will develop; but how enjoyable they are, and I am reminded of these things in what is being said about Asaph.

Now Habakkuk: he is obviously in the good of eternal life because there was nothing else for him to enjoy. The enemy said to God, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" As surrounded with blessings,

with practically no complaints and prosperity on every side, there may have been apparently some justification for the taunt: but God knew His man and, in point of fact, Job trusted Him when all else went. It is a remarkable thing, dear brethren, that the Spirit of God has not seen fit to give us very many verses describing Job's prosperity; He has given us a whole book of his discipline - and that in itself is instructive. But to refer now to Habakkuk: he had fully considered the outward position and learned it was all under control - absolutely. I, perhaps, ought to say at this juncture that the language that is used in the verses I have read I do not expect to find fulfilled in this dispensation. The Spirit of God being with the saints, I doubt very much whether the fig-tree will ever not blossom - publicly, yes, but never so privately. There will always be fruit in the vines, dear brethren - always! I believe this looks on to the great tribulation; it looks on to another day when there will be a time the like of which had not been previously. We may learn from the figure but I believe that God gives us assurance in the presence of the Spirit here and Christ on high that such extremity will never be reached at least for the saints. Indeed, I am encouraged to think this. You will remember in a day that is to come that the wheat and the barley reach a famine price, but they are still available, as though in that day what will sustain the soul will be available though a high price has to be paid for it. That is the principle that sometimes, when things get scarce, we may have to surrender more to

acquire them. But you will remember John heard a voice saying, "Do not injure the oil and the wine" (Revelation 6: 6), as though there was a touch of consideration for God's people at that dire moment. Well, if then, so now; and, as we know, the Spirit will be here until we are taken to be with Christ. I cannot believe that what is suggested in its fullness in these verses will ever come about in our day. Indeed, dear brethren, the revival in which we are having part is going through to the end. It is not all going to disintegrate and everything come to an individual position: there will always be some with whom we can work out the truth, when, as Paul says to Timothy, "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2: 22); he does not say 'as long as *there are* any,' because they are going through to the end. They are going through to the end of the dispensation, so that, in the break-up that is taking place in the world, stability is only found in keeping close to Christ and in keeping close to one another.

Well now, even though this is the case, it is interesting that Habakkuk knew God sufficiently to face this contingency. "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive-tree shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls" - we may come to that and have to live a day at a time; and sometimes our reserves are badly cut into, but God never fails - "yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation." It is an individual matter, dear brethren, but we have been having stressed before us this very day, the personal side. What is the use of being carried along in the faith of others? Thank God for the company of the brethren! Thank God for the sphere of salvation that it means! Many of us can look back and lift up our hearts to the Lord in thankfulness for the companionships and pursuits which have kept us from the world. But when it comes to a real issue, what stands us in good stead is our links with the Persons of the Godhead and our knowledge of our Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessed sense of communion with the Holy Spirit. All these things, dear brethren, mean that the saints have something in their souls into which they can retire in the knowledge of God. So, I suppose, we all have to admit that we are far more affected by circumstances than we are aware of and sometimes we find it out in a remarkable way, but it is all worth while. It is all calculated and the result is to help us to stringed instruments. "Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength," as though Habakkuk is discovering that that is where his strength lies. "And he maketh my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon my high places." They are his high places, but God is doing it for him. I believe self-reliance is one of the most baneful things we can indulge in. If we allow it in

our minds it will come into our activities. It is a question of finding things in God and not ourselves, and the note at the end shows that his contribution has a place, you might say, in the Psalms that are written from experience with God. "To the chief Musician on my stringed instruments."

As I have already remarked I really had Hezekiah especially in mind, and I refer now to him and his exercises. He had to consider the external position; he had to consider also his own internal weakness. In other words, he, with the other two I have mentioned, had to come into the good of eternal life in the knowledge of God. I am using that term, dear brethren - I hope you will not mind my doing so - because there are some things which are said by inference in Scripture. Eternal life, in the Old Testament, looked forward, I suppose, and finds its answer in the world to come. However, speaking of it as we have been today, we may enjoy it now in the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ the sent One. We read only a verse or so of what Hezekiah says but you will remember the circumstances. They are akin to the present time. He was a man who had been greatly helped and God did not forget that. For fourteen years he had been greatly helped and he did what was good and right and true before Jehovah, and that is a very good commendation, dear brethren. We should love to warrant anything like that, anything approaching it. He did what was right and true. Think of it! This is what Scripture says. Indeed, the enemy attacked after this faithfulness as though we are reminded that the devil does not waste his ammunition on that which is valueless oftentimes; he attacks what is worth while. Now it is pretty evident from the scripture that Hezekiah's illness synchronised with the attack on Jerusalem. He was a man who had a good deal to do with the singers. It was in his time that the sin offering having been offered, the burnt offering began; and the moment the burnt offering began, the song of Jehovah began with the singers and the trumpeters. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished and, when the burnt offering was finished, Hezekiah and all those with him bowed their heads and worshipped, which shows the very great progress that was made in his day, and that coming after the wicked reign of king Ahaz. It would appear from what Scripture says that there were two attacks of Sennacherib; at the first it would seem, from the book of Kings, that Hezekiah accepted a levy and came under tribute to the king of Assyria. Indeed, he took the silver from the house of God and sent it to him and stripped off the doors of the house - a most extraordinary thing! I wonder at it but it is true. That is what the Spirit of God tells us. It means that if we compromise with the world, the things of God are impoverished. However, we have been helped before; if we compromise we impoverish our links with divine things. They themselves, of course, always remain at their intrinsic

value. Then it would appear that he was taken ill and faced the whole matter with God, and the next time Sennacherib comes up, he is met with a very different story; as though we are stronger in our afflictions than we are in our prosperity, and we find that out. I say to the dear young people that we often find more integrity of heart, in the Spirit's power, in the acceptance of affliction than in our moments of prosperity; but, at all events, they evidently were made to synchronise. God not only works to plan but to time. Some may say, as I used to think myself, that it was after these things that Hezekiah was sick; but it is very easy to calculate it. We are told that he reigned twenty-nine years; we know very well that fifteen years were added to his life and we are also told that it was in the fourteenth year of his reign that Sennacherib came - fourteen and fifteen make twenty-nine. So that there is my warrant for bringing forward what some may object to. God causes these things, dear brethren; He is not the instigator of Sennacherib's attack but He is watching over the whole situation. It is one of the items of faith at the present time with the world in its precarious state, with things that might happen at any moment. It is obvious, dear brethren, that politically this world is like a volcano that may go off at any time, and many dear saints of God are quaking with perturbation. The fact of the matter is that those who know God know that He has His eye on the saints and nothing happens without Him. Whatever He allows, He can use for good. In this particular instance we know that the enemy was turned back and he never shot an arrow at Jerusalem. We may not have such immunity as that, but God will see us through - we know Him well enough. He has pledged Himself to see His people through so that anxiety can be written off as an anxiety. It may induce prayer for men, it may induce love for souls, for there are thousands in this world that know not our God. Oh, the world with all its sport, and all its pursuits, and yet, at the same time, all its disasters and sadness! I often think, as I look around at this world, what Mr. Darby said, 'when all this woe shall cease.' We do very well, you know. We have our occasions, we have our joys; we are having them today. But oh, what a world we are in! - and we are not to forget to pray for the souls of men and to pray for kings and those in authority; not in the fearful expectation that marks them but in the understanding that the divine hand controls everything for the good of the saints.

But synchronised with that, dear brethren, was a much more personal thing. What caused Hezekiah's distress was not any doubt about his soul's salvation but being removed from the sphere of usefulness. I have read that John Newton, the writer of 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,' wrote to a friend two hundred years ago and said, 'The last idol I buried was my own usefulness.' The fact is, we have to learn that whilst God would employ every

one of us, no one is indispensable. We are not the centre of anything. Christ is the centre of everything, and it is real deliverance to come to it in the soul. So Hezekiah - oh, how much he had done! What a help he had been to the saints! What there was to show, you might say, for his exercises amongst the brethren! - yet he is to be removed and he felt it. Oh, what bitterness he had! Possibly it was a bitterness that only a servant would know; but, at any rate, he experienced it, and it was an internal matter. I have often wondered why it did not happen before. Fourteen years of help from God - everything that he did he did with his whole heart and it was prospered; and yet, after two complete periods he has to learn something about himself. He has, as it were, to come through death into the sphere of eternal life, and God is leading the saints that way. Jesus, the Captain of our salvation has been made perfect through sufferings, and, as our brother was remarking this afternoon, we go that way. Death is poured in but it is only a means to an end, and as we accept it, we enjoy life out of death, life in the Spirit, life in the knowledge of God, life in relation to another scene, and the blessed Man that fills it to God's praise! So that is what Hezekiah comes to. He recognised in relation to his outward circumstances that God was the same God - God does not change. We often judge Him, dear brethren, by the allowance of His hand, but He never changes. His love is always unalterably towards His own, and eventually we learn to trust Him. Hezekiah learned that, and has put down in sobriety the lessons he had learned in facing what was so acutely personal. He says, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee" - not *they* shall, *he* shall. This confirms what our dear brother has told us. There is need for the personal side to be pursued, not that I am decrying the collective side. We are living in wonderful days; there is a great need to understand that the collective position is made up of the persons who form it. "*He* shall praise thee, as *I* do this day." The fathers to the children shall make known the truth. Dear brethren, what can we pass on? There may be instruction but what can a father pass on? - something that he has learned from God; something he has learned in his own soul; something that rings true in the experience of the brethren. Not an academic word that next week cannot be remembered, but something that is said in the power of the Spirit, which is like a seed sown that brings forth fruit to the praise of God. Oh, the need for fathers, persons who can serve in love and care and can pass on the value of experience so that the saints are brought positively and personally into the knowledge of God and what He has secured in the assembly. It says, "Jehovah was purposed to save me," and so He is! All the time before the trial and afterwards and all through as well, Jehovah was purposed to save him. "And we will play upon my stringed instruments," as though the discipline of one man is going to enrich the saints. They are all going to be brought into it. It is like the discipline on the

household in John 11, the discipline on the one household enriched the whole of Bethany. It does not say the Lord came to the house of Martha but He came to *Bethany*. The bereavement and the sorrow was in one household but the whole place benefited by it; and so here, dear brethren, the exercises of one man and his discipline are benefiting all the saints. "We will play upon my stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of Jehovah," as though his heart has found a home.

Now one more word: after all this you might wonder why it was that he succumbed to the temptation that lay in the visit of princes of Babylon. We need to speak very carefully of such a thing, but I notice this that when the prophet Isaiah came to king Hezekiah and said to him, "What said these men, and from whence came they to thee?" Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country to me, from Babylon." Now, dear brethren, I think that is where he made his miscalculation. I think sometimes we get very satisfied and think Babylon is a long way off; we think it is this great professing system that is going to be judged, and we reckon in that sense it is a far country. The fact of the matter is, it is very much nearer to us than many of us are aware. The seeds of the thing are in every one of our hearts, and it may come out if not judged. What is it? It started with Nimrod in the beginning of Genesis and it goes right through to the great city in the end of Revelation. It comes under the judgment of God. What is it? It is just aggrandisement and show in the place where Christ had but a cross and a grave. That is what our hearts are capable of. In the presence of all that God has bestowed, a little flattery may cause disaster if we have our armour off. Well, let us be vigilant and let us know how to judge ourselves and go on in humility. Let us rejoice in the blessedness of the moment. Let us go on with God and go on with Him together, keeping rank. The supremacy of Christ before us, the praise of God in our hearts, the presence of the Spirit impelling us, not only in the service of God but in the testimony. Let us remember we have everything in God and not in ourselves lest there should be any Babylonish principle which might cause disruption. Let it be kept away from us, every one of us. I have to judge my own heart every day, and every exercised person has to do the same, that nothing may be allowed that would interfere with what God has designed, the supremacy of Christ. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and may we find, as going on together in the truth, that we have things in divine Persons and be content to have them there.

So, dear brethren, I trust these impressions will work out to our better part in the praise of God. We look forward to the morrow and the following day. One rejoices in assembly privileges, and I am sure we are looking expectantly forward to the new hymn book coming into our hands: but I believe we should

be commensurately exercised that we are capacitated to sing according to God, to worship Him in spirit and in truth. May it be so, for His name's sake.

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (1)

John 13:1-5; John 13:31,32; John 14:1-20

AJG I think it is clear that this 13th chapter commences a final section of the gospel, so that it begins with "Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father." That is that the moment had now arrived for what was final in the mind of God to come in; because Christianity is the greatest thing that the heart of God has devised, involving the most wonderful place for men - that is for those of the assembly in relation to God known as Father - and the hour for this had now arrived; and what is to be noticed, I think, is that everything is in the Lord's hands, so that the more we dwell on these chapters, the more we get a sense of great stability and great certainty and that everything is in the Lord's hands, and not only so but the Lord knows everything. At the end of chapter 16 the disciples come to Him and say, "Now we know that thou knowest all things" (verse 30), showing that they had arrived at that point. I believe that what was now to open up in the Lord Himself finds its answer in the point we have now reached in the history of the assembly, that we have arrived at some sense of the immensity of what God has brought in in Christ and the Spirit; and arrived at a sense, too, of great certainty and stability, that everything is in the Lord's hands and that He knows everything, and though Satan is near - and will be near until the Lord takes us to Himself - yet even Satan is in the Lord's hand, so that the Lord says to Judas, "What thou doest do quickly." The whole matter is under divine control, and if Satan is allowed to be near, yet, if we are with Christ, we shall find that even his activities only work out to bring the truth into fuller and more glorious display. So this chapter not only presents the Lord to us in a very attractive way as knowing everything and conscious of the Father having given all things into His hands, and that He comes from God and goes to God, but it also gives us the final solution of every issue in the glorifying of God in verse 31, and then the opening up in chapter 14 of the economy, you might say, leading up to a kind of climax in the word we finished with, where it says, "In that day" - that is the Spirit's day - "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." There is an immensity of wealth in that verse that, I think, grows upon us as we think about it.

GAL Are we left here with the impression that everything is really in the hands of divine Persons, and They are going to give effect to what is in Their mind according to divine counsel in Their operations in love?

AJG I thought so, and that the whole matter is definitely fixed, even the hour; that everything is going through according to plan. It is most assuring to know that the hour had come and no one could have brought it forward, nor delayed it: "The hour had come."

HDT It had been stated earlier in the gospel. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Would that not emphasise what you are saying, that the plan was fixed long before?

AJG Yes, I think so, and the Lord is presented as knowing it, too - "knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands" - so that the whole position is in the hands of Christ, and then for us in the hands of the Spirit, and that we are to go forward in great stability of mind and heart. It is not that you are unfeeling as to Satan's activities,

because it says the Lord was troubled in spirit as conscious that one of His own would prove a traitor. So that we are not unfeeling as to what happens, but, at the same time, we go forward in unshaken stability.

HW Would it contribute to our stability to bear in mind the reference in Job that Satan had to give an account to God Himself?

AJG It would. I think what we see more and more is that the introduction of sin into the universe of God has given occasion for God to take up the challenge that it has constituted, and to meet it in man, in the Son of man, of course, but also in the saints, and that in the meeting of it God shines out with a glory in which He could not have been known apart from it; so that there is great establishment in seeing that even evil is under divine control and used for divine glory.

SEE Would the fact that it was during supper, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas the son of Simon, Iscariote, that he should deliver Him up, show that Satan was attacking things at the very centre?

AJG Yes, I think so. He is always seeking to get in amongst those who are nearest to the Lord positionally. Of course Judas was not near to the Lord morally, but he was in that position of being near to the Lord. We are told earlier what the secret was, that Judas was a thief and had the bag and what was put therein, showing that if Satan gains an advantage or gets in through one or another, you can rest assured that there is some reason underlying it, some moral reason that gives Satan the opportunity. John is presented as the opposite to that. He was in the bosom of Jesus and leaned on Jesus' breast, showing that there is a way in which he could go through in stability.

HDT The only way, I suppose.

AJG Yes.

HG Would that way be shown in "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"? Is that another feature of stability?

AJG It is, because that is something that we can rely upon, the love of Christ. The great thing is to appreciate it and to avail ourselves of it like John.

GCS Would the washing of the feet enable us to have part with Him? He goes back to His Father and God. In chapter 20 He says, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Is this feet washing a necessity for us to have part with Him?

AJG We have to learn to allow ourselves to be served by Christ, do you think? Peter had a great difficulty in getting rid of himself, what he was going to be and what he was going to do, but we have to learn to allow the Lord to serve us. I think it is most touching that the Lord should desire that we should have part with Him, not only, I suppose, in privilege, but also in testimony. I believe He would bring us with Him into every position that He fills out in manhood.

WSS Is this "part with him" a present thought?

AJG Surely.

EuR Does it bear on all the following chapters right up to chapter 20, "part with me"?

AJG I think it does. I think it is well to see that, that we are to have part with Christ in service God-ward, and we are to have part with Him in the privilege of testimony here. In each case we have to recognise our need of being served, served in love by Christ Himself, and then we are to learn from Christ to serve one another in love, and thus to constitute a circle of love here which would be invulnerable against the attacks of the enemy.

GCS Does Satan go out here under the power of love?

AJG Yes, I would think so. You mean Judas goes out?

GCS Yes. Satan entered into him.

Ques Is not the form of the Lord's service here intended to touch our hearts with the greatness of the stoop in love? His divine glory shines through His manhood.

AJG Yes, exactly, so that if He serves in love it does not derogate from His glory in any sense, but rather enhances it. And then it says that He took His garments again.

Ques "Part with me." Would that include the thought of suffering?

AJG The thought of suffering, I suppose, in the testimonial side of the matter.

JSE Does all this hinge on our being helped by the Spirit to enter upon this great matter of what is final? Do we not need some help as to the blessedness of this matter, that the Lord Himself is now in final conditions?

AJG I think we do, and conditions that are wonderful the more we think of it. "I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." I believe that goes further than merely that He is in a place of affection with the Father. He is in His Father's affections and we are in His affections and He is in ours - that is perfectly true but I believe it goes further than that, and shows how wonderful the economy is, that there is a Man - speaking reverently - a Man in the Father who can be there because of what He is in His Person; and we are in Him, united to Him in the Spirit, and He is in us. It shows the immensity of what has come in in Christianity.

HDT Have you in mind that that is implied in the verse you have read, "God also shall glorify him in himself?"

AJG Well, only that that is more in relation to the solution of moral issues, is it not?

HDT Yes. I was thinking of the final result as the ultimate end of it.

AJG It seems to me that the first part of John 14, down to the end of verse 14, is setting out the position objectively in relation to the Father and the Son, and then the Spirit is brought in, from verse 15 onwards, in order that we might not only be intelligent as to it but learn our own part in it.

GAL Is it not a divine necessity that the whole matter of the challenge to God's rights by the introduction of sin should be removed by the Son of man, before the divine privilege of the Father's house is opened up to us?

AJG You feel it is morally right that there should be no issue left unmet.

CEJ The Lord says in verse 1 that He should depart out of this world to the Father, and then in verse 3 that He came out from God and was going to God. Would you say a little as to the two suggestions: "depart to the Father," and then "going to God"?

AJG I suppose He was going to open up the Father's realm, as we often say. That is as a Man He was going to take a place in relation to the Father, but then what was involved in that was that God was brought into full declaration, and a perfect answer was being secured for God; but we reach God through the Father, it seems to me.

CEJ I was seeking help. I was thinking of John 20, "My Father, and your Father, ... my God, and your God."

AJG Evidently the great end must be *God*. God is the great beginning and He is the great end. He says in Isaiah 48, "I, the first, and I, the last," that is God began everything and everything ends with God. But then, in order to bring us in, in relations with Him in the greatest possible intimacy. He has been pleased to conceive the economy and to take the name of Father.

HFN In view of what you are saying, is the final thought in view, in your mind, in 1 Corinthians 15: 24 - 28, "Then the end, when he gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father; when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that is annulled is death. For he has put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he says that all things are put in subjection it is evident that it is except him who put all things in subjection to him. But when all things shall have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all." Is that the great final end to which we are moving, and which we are reaching at the present time?

AJG I believe so, that God would make Himself, in the fulness in which He is known - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit - everything to us.

HFN So does that really touch God's eternal supremacy?

AJG I think so, for after all we are very near to eternity. We talk about the millennium having to come in first, and, of course, that is true from the standpoint of God's ways, but actually when we are taken to be with Christ, we ourselves enter upon eternal conditions. We are much nearer to eternity than we realise.

HFN We feel in the Spirit that there is only a thin veil between, that divides from the other world.

AJG Quite so.

JSE In the allusion to the millennium, do you mean that no actual change takes place with ourselves after the millennium, but before?

AJG Exactly. Those who have part on the earth during the millennium and are carried on to the new earth will undoubtedly have to take on some nature of change, corresponding in a sense to resurrection; but we enter upon our final conditions when the Lord comes for us, so that we are a great deal nearer to eternity than we may realise.

HDT Is it not a fact that the millennium is part of God's ways, whereas the assembly is linked with Christ as part of His purpose?

AJG Well, quite so.

JMcK In the first chapter we have "No one has seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Is the going to God the answer to that revelation?

AJG I think so. The going to God has that in mind, as I understand it. He brings God out perfectly in coming from God, and in going to God would secure an answer in perfection in the saints.

HDT I wondered whether "He came out from God" is a reminder to us as to who He is in His Person.

AJG So that you might say it is God coming out.

JGW Would you open out a little why the service of the Lord to His own, and the example which He has left to us, follows immediately on the words as to coming from God and going to God? In what way do we carry on the service?

AJG I think it is a question of our position here in testimony. The Lord would have a circle characterised by love in this world. He is gone, but there is to be a circle of love in which God is served and in which the truth as to God is maintained, so there is to be the service of God maintained in the presence of evil, and there is to be a testimony to God in His nature in this circle of love; and the more love is active amongst us and cultivated, the less Satan can get in. Jerusalem is as a city that is compact together (Psalm 122) - that is the great answer to Satan's activities. The saints should be compacted together, and the service of love to one another goes a long way towards securing that.

EuR In verse 35, as to the new commandment, He says, "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves."

AJG Quite so. It is a most important feature that there should be a circle here where love reigns and can be seen to reign; and not only is it important in the way of testimony, but it is also important because it is a great support to us individually in our position in the testimony.

AB Does it have in mind a reserve amongst the saints - "love amongst yourselves" - that can be drawn on if the enemy attacks, and in view of difficulties that may arise, that love would meet them?

AJG I think so. So that attention is drawn in the note to the link between the statement that the Lord loved His own which were in the world, and then in

Acts 4 that they depart to their own company. There is a link between Christ's own and our own company; it is the same company.

SEE Would the service following immediately on that wonderful statement, suggest that it would be carried out from the highest level?

AJG Yes, it is very menial service to wash feet, but that service has been ennobled by the One who has done it, and not one of us should think it beneath him to get down to the saints and serve them as occasion requires.

FVW Would this service help to merge the saints together and put a check upon the tendency to too individualistic features as seen in Peter?

AJG Yes, I think so. I am sure we need to cultivate it. Sometimes we begin to show love when a person is beginning to stray and it may be it is a little too late. We might have helped more if we had cultivated personal links with one another more when things were normal.

HDT Does it involve what is mutual - "By love serve one another," Galatians 5: 13?

AJG Yes, exactly.

HFN Would this service of feet-washing really provide a suitable atmosphere, in view of the truth the Lord was ministering here? Do we not often try to develop the truth apart from an atmosphere?

AJG I think so, but I believe the Lord is stressing conditions, holy conditions of love amongst ourselves, because of the greatness of what the Spirit is prepared to open up and bring us into, He must have conditions.

HFN That is exactly what was in one's mind. Would you say a little more in relation to how this bears on the scene of testimony and then the realm of privilege. You were referring to it a few moments ago.

AJG Well, of course, love amongst ourselves is in itself a testimony. I mean there is a sphere in the saints in the midst of the world in which what is of God is seen. It is seen livingly expressed. So the characteristic word in John's gospel is "Come and see." It is not a question so much of verbal testimony, as of the thing being set out in love, so that people can be invited to "Come and see."

AJEW Is that not involved in the Lord's words to Philadelphia? He speaks of those of the, synagogue of Satan, and then he says, "I will cause that they shall come and shall do homage before thy feet," Revelation 3: 9.

AJG Yes, that is good. So He says to the overcomer that He will make him a pillar, that is the characteristic Philadelphian stands out as himself exemplifying

the truth.

ALRT Does the bosom of Jesus stand relative to the privilege side, and the breast of Jesus to the testimony side?

AJG I would think so. The bosom of Jesus is the restfulness and tenderness of love as enjoyed, but the breast of Jesus is where support and strength are found.

HDT The reliability of that love.

AJG Yes.

PGB In the epistle to the Corinthians Paul has to speak of love in an abstract way because it was not sufficiently developed practically in that assembly, and then he refers two or three times to Satan, as though to show that the enemy gets in when love is not operating amongst us.

AJG Quite so.

JMcK Would John himself help to provide what was needed in the way of conditions? I was thinking of the way he has given himself over to these eternal relations of love, as distinct from how he is presented in the synoptic gospels (see, for example, Luke 9: 49 - 55 and Mark 10: 35 - 37) and whether his presence and his attitude in the bosom of Jesus would not help in the general atmosphere, giving an impression of the Lord in this matter.

AJG I think so. He shows that there was at any rate one who appreciated the assembly's unique position in the love of Christ and was enjoying the restfulness of it, so that he could go through in John's gospel. There is very little that suggests anything in the way of failure with John.

GCS Does it show the effectiveness of this in the beginning of Acts, where John and Peter were together?

AJG Yes. Peter is foremost in the sovereignty of the Lord to take a more prominent part in public testimony, and yet you feel John is there as providing the moral basis for all that is set out in Peter.

AH Would you say something about Mr. B.'s enquiry?

AJG I thought it was complete in itself, if I may say so. That is, I think, he was bringing to our notice that in Corinth Satan had a certain inlet, a certain opportunity, because of the lack of love. When Paul speaks of love to the Corinthians he cannot speak of what is there in the company, he has to present it abstractly.

AH Would you think that the household of Chloe might bear some features of this feet-washing?

AJG I think so, and the household of Stephanas. It was not that love was entirely lacking in Corinth, but it needs to be brought forward in an abstract way because it was really so little esteemed.

HDT He does bring it in in the injunction "Let all things ... be done in love," 1 Corinthians 16: 14. He was not content to leave it in the abstract. He intended everything to work out actively.

AJG I believe that is a most important matter. One has often been struck with that thought, that in Corinthians, which is an administrative epistle, he should finish with that word, "Let all things ye do be done in love." I believe that is a great need in certain parts at the present time.

WSS As to the position of the "disciple whom Jesus loved," to which reference has been made, is that a concrete example of one having part with the Lord, and do we reach that, as far as we may reach it, at the Supper particularly?

AJG Yes, I would say so.

HDT May I refer again to your earlier remark? Do you mean where there is conflict for the truth, and where administrative action needs to be taken? You have that verse particularly in mind, "Let all things ye do be done in love."

AJG Well, not only where conflict is on, though that comes in, I am sure, but in all that is done by the assembly love has to be in evidence. There may be need for discipline, there must be rule, things must be maintained, but, at the same time, love is to be the dominant feature in everything.

HFR We have had a good deal brought before us as to twelve being an administrative number.

AJG Yes, exactly.

GAL Is it not striking in this chapter how the Lord brings in everything that is requisite in His own Person for administration? There were the betrayers there, and Peter was about to forsake him, but the Lord brings in in His own Person everything that was requisite to set their minds at rest.

AJG Yes, he does; that is striking.

FWK Why does the Lord refer to Himself as Teacher and Lord in connection with this incident?

AJG Well, they called Him that: "Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am so. If I therefore, the Lord and Teacher," He says. I think it is

a question of His own personality being pressed upon them, that He should have taken up such a service; and, as has often been remarked, Paul could gather sticks and make a fire. If so great a man as Paul should do that, any of us could do it. Now in verse 31 we come to this crucial point, "When therefore he was gone out Jesus says, Now is the Son of man glorified." Just before that the Lord had said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." The whole matter is under His control, and now the Son of man is to be glorified in the devotion in which He would give Himself up to glorify God.

HG Would you say something as to the fact that in the first scripture, where it speaks of the devil having put the thought of betrayal into the heart of Judas, Jesus is seen going down; but in the second scripture it is "When therefore he was gone out," and He is spoken of as being glorified?

AJG Well. He goes down, of course, in the service of love, but the Lord now, as thinking of Himself as about to be glorified, is referring to Himself being glorified in a moral sense. He goes on to say, "God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately." The first thing He has in mind is that the Son of man is to be glorified in a moral sense, that is that He would surrender Himself in love in death, in order that every issue raised by the incoming of sin should be met in Him, and God could shine out in the glory of redeeming love.

GAL This would be the first time a man had gone into death to the glory of God.

AJG Yes, indeed. I think it helps to see that in juxtaposition to this you have Satan. Satan had entered into Judas, so that Satan had entered into a man in whom he would express himself fully, in the act of the gravest wickedness in the history of the world. Now God has - speaking reverently - this Man, in whom, in the presence of evil, He would shine out, not as condoning evil but as judging it and yet finding a way to come out in love.

HDT So that the point of the greatest shame publicly, was the very point of the greatest moral glory.

AJG Exactly.

HDT It is the cross, really, is it not?

AJG It is.

GAL It is propitiation He has in mind, is it not? He glorifies God in that.

AJG Oh, yes, surely. That is to say, the rights of God's throne are challenged by sin, and His nature was affronted by sin; and all that is due to God's

throne, and all that is due to His nature, is met in the wondrous fragrance of the sacrifice of Christ.

HDT Might I ask, to make it clear, as to this expression, "Now is the Son of man glorified"? That is personal to Christ, is it not? That is, the cross, being the point of shame, becomes the point of the greatest moral glory; and then God is glorified in Him, that is something further, is it not? The conciliation of God's nature and attributes in that glorious way is a matter of testimony. So that, is there not in these glories something which we need to distinguish, in that sense?

AJG Exactly. That is to say that it was the personal glory of the Son of Man that He would devote Himself in self-sacrifice, meeting all God's claims according to His holiness, and setting free the floodgates of redeeming love, and in His so doing, God Himself shone out in glory.

HDT Does that not give us an admiration for the principle of obedience which we would never learn otherwise?

AJG Quite so, and then as you say God has been glorified in Him, and His attributes and His nature have been perfectly conciliated, and God stands out supreme and Satan disappears from view. In spite of evil being seen, the scene is free from it, and what remains is the fragrance of Christ and the blessedness of God.

GCS Satan's man is exposed. His bowels gushed out in Acts 1.

AJG Yes, but that is not brought in here. In a sense you are no longer occupied with evil, the whole thing has been closed up, and what you are left with is the fragrance of Christ and the blessedness of the love of God.

GAL "Where sin o'er all seemed to prevail, Redemption's glory shed" (235:4).

JSE Does the first part of the chapter link our affections on with the Lord in a personal way, as to what He has gone into Himself, without reference to saying anything? It says that He *knew* that His hour had come, not that He *said* it, but He *knew* it, and then as Judas goes out the Lord says all this about the Son of man. Is that with the intent of our being at home in the sense that everything is consummated by that Person as the Son of man; whereas in this earlier section it seems to link with Himself apart from His saying anything?

AJG Yes, I think so, but now the Lord is speaking, as you say, in verses 31 and 32. He is speaking with a view to our being intelligent and also restful in the sense that God has stepped into this matter. He has taken up the challenge and met it in grace in the Son of man, and everything now has been met, and we can be restful. Although Peter turns out to be a failure, as he

does in the end of the chapter, we can still be restful because every issue is met, and God has opened out His own purposes of grace, and the Godhead is equal to effecting them.

WSS Would you say a word about the last part of verse 32? The Lord says, "God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately."

AJG I think it refers to God not having delayed to raise up Christ and place Him in the greatest exaltation in heaven.

WSS I was wondering whether "Glorify him immediately" would connect with the coming of the Spirit.

AJG It might connect with that also.

GAL The end of Ephesians 1 would set out the position fully.

AJG It does, quite so.

EWG "Raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father," Romans 6: 4.

AJG Yes, and not only raised from the dead but seated in the highest place of glory.

EWG God's answer to it.

HFN Would the answer, too, be seen in what is established in the circle of love, and then it says,

"A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another."

AJG The Lord is, I think, stressing that this is imperative, do you not think? He was to depart, they were to be left here, and the first thing that was imperative was that they should establish love amongst themselves.

HFN I was thinking of what Mr. Raven pointed out, that wherever you get the presentation of the glory of the Lord in this way, it is always followed by a circle down here. For instance in Philippians 2, where you get the Lord's glory, the saints come out as those who shine as lights in the world, and "children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation." Every scripture that presents His glory in this way gives a present answer.

AJG That is very interesting, I am sure.

WS Does not the use of the term "Son of man" suggest the whole universe of bliss, the centre of which is Christ?

AJG Well, the title, I suppose, may perhaps include that. I thought the point was that God was doing it in a Man. He is taking up the issues in Man. The

angels who fell are reserved for judgment, and God is taking up the issues raised by the intervention of sin, and He has solved them in Man, and He is going to bring man into blessing.

GCS Is that seen in Hebrews 2, "We see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour"?

AJG Quite so, that is the Son of man.

HFN Is that not of supreme importance, as to what you are stressing? We cannot touch that world - a realm of privilege - until moral questions have been settled, can we?

AJG No, it is most important, and in the settlement of that we find that love has triumphed. Love is supreme, and therefore we can have a circle of love down here.

WSS I was thinking of Mr. N.'s remark about the circle of love in connection with the glorifying immediately. The circle of love seems to be formed in chapter 14 particularly. The Lord says of the coming of the Spirit in chapter 16, "He shall glorify me."

AJG Quite so. Now in regard to chapter 14 we can only touch things lightly, but they can be filled out some other time. In chapter 14 we have the opening out of the Father's house, the Father's counsels, and the special place that the assembly has, the unique place in those counsels as peculiarly loved by Christ, so that our place is "that where I am ye also may be." But then the Lord stresses believing on Him. He says, "Believe also on me," and then again "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me." He is stressing believing on Him, as though He would emphasise the importance of our having the eyes of our hearts centred in Himself, a Man, in the glory of His Person, but truly Man, now in the presence of the Father, and all that is involved in that wonderful position.

EuR We can in no way be in the gain of the revelation of the Father, in the making known of God, apart from the mediatorial position that the Son and the Spirit have taken.

AJG That is right. Christ is the only one spoken of as the Mediator. There is no doubt that the Spirit's service is also mediatorial in character, but the Lord first of all is presenting Himself as the Mediator. So it is, "Believe also on me." Then He says, "No one comes to the Father unless by me," and then again, "Believe me that I am in the Father."

GAL Is that not all to stress the glory of Christ as the vessel of divine revelation? Here was all the truth of God presented in a Person, was it not?

AJG And is it not important that that should be held in our souls? We may tend to think that God has been pleased to bless us in sonship, but if we divorce it from Christ Himself, we lose its blessedness.

HDT So that the fact of Christ's manhood is not a mere doctrine to us - it is something upon which eternity hangs for us.

AJG It is, and it is the place we have in the love of Christ, "That where I am ye also may be." We are only creatures, and yet we are to be in that place, and the more we become conscious of it, the more God will stand out in His wonderful blessedness.

EBL Is chapter 14 the great comfort chapter?

AJG Oh, this is the great comfort chapter, but this is far more than that. The more we begin to get an understanding of how blessed God is, and what He has conceived, and His ability to bring it to pass - it is God who brings it to pass, the Father, the Son and the Spirit - the more we become satisfied with God and our portion with God, you might say.

MPS Would you open up for us the difference between verses 10 and 11, and verse 20?

AJG I am glad you mentioned that, because it seems to me that the Lord is first of all seeking to establish us in the appreciation of Himself in relation to His Father. He would have that before us first, and then He goes further. When it comes to the day of the Spirit, we are to be fully established in that, and to learn another thing, and that is that we are in Him and He in us, and we are brought in because obviously the economy necessitates our being in it. The economy is not complete, indeed it is not necessary, apart from us. It is because God has in view to bless man that He has conceived the economy, and the economy is not complete without us, we are needed to fill it out.

HDT And yet the fulness of divine thoughts is seen in Christ personally.

AJG Exactly, and then the Spirit comes in to make it good to us, so that it is the Father and the Son and the Spirit. It says in Hebrews, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things" (Hebrews 2: 10), as though there it is presented that God Himself does everything. I mean it is not distinguished between the Persons of the Godhead, as in Corinthians, where it says, "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." In

Hebrews it says, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," that is God Himself effects everything.

GAL In the first instance which Mr. S. referred to, the Lord Jesus has to fall back upon the testimony of His works, to emphasise in their minds who He was; but in the second it seems that it is the testimony of the Spirit in the soul, leading us into the fulness of the relationship of which you are speaking.

AJG Yes, quite so.

JSE Do we not need to pay some definite attention to this statement, that it can only obtain in relation to Christ, as Himself in the final circumstances?

AJG Exactly, and in relation to Christ in manhood. We have no part in Deity obviously, and yet we are united to One who is in Himself God. That is the marvel of what has come in, as a result of the incarnation and the coming of the Spirit.

EuR Will you say something as to "I in you"?

AJG It is not only that Christ is in our affections, but He is in us by the Spirit, and He takes His place in the midst of the assembly too. He is absolutely committed to us, if one may say so reverently.

AB Would it imply that He is actively in the affections of the saints? I was thinking of the last clause of John 17.

AJG I think it does. It says in Romans 8, where it is presenting the truth individually, "If Christ be in you," and it is wonderful to think how absolutely Christ is dwelling in us by the Spirit.

CEJ Would it be suggested in the Lord breathing into them and saying "Receive ye Holy Spirit"?

AJG The Lord breathing into them His own life, you might say, by the Spirit.

HFR Does it not emphasise what has been said as to the personnel of the assembly having the nearest place to Him?

AJG That is what I had in mind. We have to be very careful to see that our thoughts are holy in dealing with these great matters, but I believe the more we weigh over this verse, the more wonderful it becomes.

SEE Would you connect "I in you" with what the apostle says in Colossians 1:27, "God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory"?

AJG I think so. I am not sure whether that goes quite as far as this, but I think it links on with it.

HDT Would you think that "Ye in me" must necessarily precede, in one sense, "I in you"?

AJG I think so, but say what you have in mind.

HDT I was thinking of everything working out, the place that Christ has as Man as the centre of the Father's thoughts and the place we have as connected with Him - but then this is all to result in the formation by the Spirit of Him in us; it is a moral order that could not be reversed.

AJG Quite so, but then the Lord has His place personally in the assembly, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises." The assembly is His body, these are marvellous and abiding conditions that have come to pass.

EuR Is it not important what Mr. E, is insisting upon, Christ in final conditions? It was as the ascending Man that He breathed into them, was it not?

AJG Yes. Another thing we might mention is that I suppose at least three quarters of John's gospel is the words of Jesus. It differs from the synoptic gospels in that way, in that it is largely made up of the actual words of Jesus; this applies, of course, to chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17, as well as much of the earlier part of the gospel, the words of Jesus. It is well that we should get them into our minds. Read them over and over again so that they get a place in your memory, and they enlarge to you as you dwell on them.

AED Is that what He means when He says that His words are Spirit and are life?

AJG Yes, exactly, His words, and Peter said "Thou hast words of life eternal," John 6: 68. The Lord had not been speaking to them about current happenings in the world. He had spoken to them about His Father's things, and Peter said that they were words of life eternal.

HFN Would there be anything in the thought of connecting Ephesians with "ye in me," and Philippians with "I in you"?

AJG Well, I should think there is, though "I in you" goes beyond what is characteristic. I have no doubt that what we get in this chapter really answers to the top-stone of Paul's ministry.

HDT Is it not remarkable that it must have had a foremost place in the Lord's mind as being one of the first-fruits of the Spirit's day?

AJG It is, quite so.

HDT Is that not seen in the words "In that day ye shall know," as though it was one of the first things the Lord had in mind.

AJG Exactly.

AB Would it be a foretaste of eternal conditions?

AJG That is exactly what it is.

PW Would it be out of place to ask what Peter means when, in the second epistle, he says, "That through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature"?

AJG Through these, that is the exceeding great and precious promises, "ye may become partakers of the divine nature."

PW How may we become partakers of the divine nature?

AJG As far as I understand, we become partakers of the divine nature as born of God.

GAL I think our brother had in mind the distinction between deity and divine nature.

PW That is what I had in mind.

AJG Of course there is no suggestion of having part in deity. The divine nature is love, and we are born of God; but just as children take on the characteristics of their parents, so, as born of God, we love.

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (2)

John 15:1-12; John 16:7-15; John 16:21-33

HFN There has been a desire expressed that you would kindly say a further word as to the thought that we closed with this morning, as to John 14: 20. I think you made a remark that there was something more in the verse than the matter of the affections, and the brethren would be very glad if you would repeat that.

AJG I thought it came as a kind of climax to the service of the Spirit to us. For that day is, of course, this day - the day of the Spirit - and, while it is perfectly true that we get a sense by the Spirit that Christ is in His Father's affections, and that we are in His, and that He is in ours, I do not think it is limited to that. In addition to that, it seems to me that the Spirit brings home to us the wonderfulness of the position that has now come in in Christ: that there is a Man who can be said to be in His Father in a most absolute way, involving the truth of His Person, and yet it is apprehended in a Man; and then that we are in Him. It is not, as we have often said, that we ever partake in Deity, but we are, in fact, united to Christ eternally, and therefore in the greatest conceivable nearness to Christ and to the Father. He is in us, too, because the assembly is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all, and the Lord takes His place in the midst of the assembly; so that the answer which God has now, which is to take form in the assembly, is commensurate with the light, because Christ is in us. I do not know whether that explains it.

HFN Yes, I think it does excellently.

PAR Would you say why the word 'objective knowledge' is used in these verses?

AJG Because I think it is a question of the knowledge we get of things, as helped by the Spirit to occupy ourselves with Christ where He is. Earlier in the chapter the Lord says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life"; so the whole truth is to be apprehended objectively in Christ. In the epistle we have the counterpart to that, where it says, "The Spirit is the truth." As we move in things in the Spirit, and only in the Spirit, we touch the truth. The Spirit will never lead us into anything that is not the truth.

GAL Have we not title and power to enjoy our relations with Christ, and then entering into all that He is as Man, in the fact that we are in Him?

AJG Quite so. I only thought that the more we dwell on verse 20, the more it shows how wonderful the position is that God has brought to pass for man, that is, those of the assembly, and how the position really is filled out and made good by the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

Coming to these chapters we have read, it is clear that it is now a question of our position in testimony, but the Lord seems to indicate that underlying testimony is fruit bearing. The spring of all true testimony is consideration for God, and what will afford pleasure to God, and hence the necessity of learning everything from Christ and abiding in Him. The second thing is that in chapter 16 the Lord stresses the place the Spirit has in relation to it, as though the Spirit takes charge of the whole position; so that the Lord says, "When *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth," and "Having come, *he* will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," and so on. There is the emphatic word "*He*." *He* would guide into all the truth and glorify Christ.

Another thing which comes into great prominence in the two chapters, is the importance the Lord attaches to prayer, and the privilege of it. It is not, so to speak, so much what we are going to do, but we will be in concert with the mind of God, and know the privilege of asking, and the Father doing things, or the Lord doing things. The Lord seems to put testimony in this gospel on a very high level, as being that which was set out in Himself, and now to be continued in His disciples. He says, "I have spoken these things to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full" (John 15: 11), as though His position in testimony here, though one of constant reproach and suffering, was one of joy to Him.

AH "Every branch in me not bearing fruit, he takes it away," chapter 15: 1. Would you enlarge a little on that, please? Do you link it in your mind with valuelessness on our part in the testimonial position?

AJG I would think so.

GAL Do you judge it to be important to take account of the figure that is used? The vine is seen down here, as growing down here, is it not?

AJG Exactly. The wood of it is worthless. The whole value of the vine is in the fruit it brings forth as the result of abiding in the stock itself. But the wood itself is valueless, as Ezekiel shows. It is a remarkable picture of the testimony according to divine thought; and it spreads and takes form in clusters, suggesting perhaps what is seen in the local companies.

CG Is it in contrast to the men of Judah; Isaiah 5: 2? They were his pleasant plant, and they should have been for testimony?

AJG Yes, I suppose the allusion is to that, "I am the true vine."

APA Primarily was the branch not bearing fruit Judas?

AJG It does look as though the branch not bearing fruit is really one who has no part in it at all, but is only in it in the way of profession.

GCS Does fruit for God involve testimony to man?

AJG I thought that was so important to notice. Underlying the idea of our position in testimony, is this matter of fruit for God. So that the Lord says, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8: 29), showing what was the motive governing Him in His position here in testimony.

SM What would you say about the thought of fruit and testimony in the bells and pomegranates on the garments of the high priest?

AJG It is just the completion, you might say, of the whole system that depends on the High Priest, that is Christ in heaven. They were on the borders of his garments. It is the completion of the picture of the system that depends on Christ in heaven, that there is fruit and testimony down here.

ETS Would you say a word about "My Father is the husbandman"?

AJG There is the idea of tending the vine, "As to every branch in me not bearing fruit, he takes it away; and as to every one bearing fruit, he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit." So that the Father is brought in, in that way, as taking an individual interest in every branch that bears fruit.

GAL Would it be a little on the line of Hebrews 12, and the Father's discipline that we might be partakers of His holiness; verse 10?

AJG I suppose so. The fact that the Lord brings in the Father as the husbandman rather stresses the side of affection entering into the matter.

HDT Would it be right to suggest that the Lord continues to be the Vine? Whilst He was that exclusively in His pathway here, He is the One who gives rise to any pleasure for God in His saints now, is He not?

AJG I thought so. I thought that was the importance of "Abide in me and I in you." That is, it entirely shuts out human ideas or methods in the testimony. It shows the importance of maintaining this - "Abide in me and I in you."

HDT So that, whilst the Spirit of God is not particularly mentioned in this paragraph, it involves His activities with us, for it is only thus that we are in touch with Christ on high.

AJG Yes, I am sure.

AB Would fruit be the result of deriving from Christ, and life in that way coming into evidence?

AJG I am sure that is the thought. It is that really which constitutes the testimony.

HDT Have we connected testimony too much with activity, rather than the thought of fruit, which is a constitutional idea, is it not?

AJG I think we have. I think if these were more carefully attended to, it would entirely shut out popular methods in preaching or service, or anything of that sort. In the earlier chapters of the Acts, while there was the preaching, at the same time when the apostles were released from prison by the angel they were told to go and speak in the temple to the people "all the words of this life," Acts 5: 20. The life that was to be seen among believers in Jerusalem was the testimony.

HAH "He has poured out this which ye behold and hear," Acts 2: 33.

AJG "Behold and hear," that was the Spirit seen in the results He produced in the saints.

HDT So that it says of the man, "Beholding the man who had been healed standing with them," Acts 4: 14. It does not say that he did anything or said anything. They could do nothing against him.

AJG Exactly.

WSS The thought of love is very much in this passage. The Lord abiding in His Father's love, and the acquiring of fruit for the Father, would be a love matter, would it not?

AJG It would. It is very touching the way the Lord contemplates that our position in testimony is to correspond with the position He filled in testimony; with Him it was a love matter, and with us it is to be the same.

WSS It seems very wonderful that the Lord says, in chapter 14, "I leave peace with you; I give *my* peace to you" (verse 27), and now He speaks of our loving one another as He loves us. His love is here. Now He speaks of the Father's love, so that the Father's love is here, and the joy that was in Him is here.

AJG It is a remarkable thing that the Lord puts abiding in His Father's love as being the outcome of His having kept His Father's commandments, as though He would set out the way that we are to take it up, and we shall abide in His love if we keep His commandments.

WSS So He says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," verse 7. Would that come into it?

AJG I thought perhaps that went even further. I thought abiding in Christ really involves that we keep His commandments. It will deliver us from all lawlessness. His words abiding in us would give us intelligence. We need both if we are to ask what we will and it is to come to pass. We need to be delivered from all lawlessness, so that the Father will hear us and our prayers will have power. But then, if whatever we ask is to be given to us, we need to ask intelligently, and hence the need to have Christ's word abiding in us.

WSS You mean there is a distinction in that way between the words and the commandments. That is helpful.

AJG I think so.

JGW I was just going to enquire whether the scripture in Colossians 1: 5, 6, speaking of the glad tidings and the word of truth preached, and the effect it had constitutionally in those that heard it, those in Colosse bearing fruit and growing, would fit in with your suggestion this afternoon?

AJG I think it does. You get a remarkable expression in Acts 12: 24, that "the word of God grew and spread itself," as though there is a certain power in the word itself to spread itself.

GAL The Lord Jesus says here, "Without me ye can do nothing," verse 5. Is that not very important? Should not that enter into every action?

AJG Yes, indeed.

FWW Would the question of abiding involve communion, too? Is this question of communion something that we have to watch in the busy pathway?

AJG I am sure it is, and to understand that all fruit that is pleasing to God is derived from Christ. He remains, in that way, the standard and source of all that is pleasing to God.

JFP Is it not connected with movement in verse 16? - "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and that ye should bear fruit." I was thinking of the words "set" and "that ye should go."

AJG That is interesting. That is that the full position is ordered of the Lord. I think there is nothing so establishing as the sense we get, as reading these chapters, that the whole position is in the Lord's hands and that He knows everything. So that, whatever may arise, whatever Satan may bring about in that way by opposition, whatever conditions may arise in the world, the Lord knows everything, and the whole mind of God, too, and here in that position of testimony He has set the saints.

HDT He has experienced it, first-hand - what the world really was - and, as loving His own in that very position, He adequately provided for them.

AJG Exactly, and then you might say it is added to by the coming in of the Comforter.

HDT Yes, quite so. I think the Spirit's day was in mind all the way through the section.

AJG I am sure it is.

EuR He moves in the midst of the seven candlesticks here, as it is brought in in Revelation.

AJG You mean the Lord moves in the midst of the candlesticks? No doubt He does. But it is not quite the position in view in these verses, because Revelation contemplates a certain judicial attitude on the part of the Lord, whilst this contemplates the normal position of those who are truly disciples of Christ.

HFN Does this chapter really set us in relation to each divine Person, the Father in relation to discipleship, and then we come in as the Lord's friends, and then at the end we get the witness in regard to the Spirit? And then our position is defined in regard to the circle of love and the hatred of the world. Would the whole position come in in this chapter?

AJG I think it does. We get the stressing of love, the commanding of it, because we are in a world of hatred, and therefore we must have a base of operations, and a base to which we can retire and find comfort. That is in the circle of love, in the circle of the brethren.

AB Have you anything further to say in regard to the subject of prayer? You alluded to it earlier.

AJG It comes into verses 7 and 8. The Lord goes on to say, "In this is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples of mine." I am inclined to think that the Lord is referring to the fact that He Himself was constantly in prayer, as carrying the whole of divine interests in His heart, and praying in relation to them, and that was peculiarly pleasing to God; and He would set us in the same position, and would enlarge upon it in chapter 16, where He encourages us to pray to the Father.

WSS Is the asking in verses 7 and 16 particularly connected with spiritual things?

AJG I think so. I think it is a question of having the whole scope of the will of God intelligently in our mind and heart, and giving ourselves to prayer in

relation to it, prayer that would be intelligent, too; that would take account of conditions that are existing, and of the enemy's movements, too.

HDT So that as abiding in Christ we should, as it were, enquire, and we are in consort with His mind on every matter?

AJG That is what I thought. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." It is a most striking statement, as though God, in a way, says these conditions being available you will be in that position.

HDT Did not Mr. Stoney say that it was more to the Lord that the saints should have thoughts in common with Him, rather than all the activities that may result from it.

AJG Yes.

AB Should it result in the saints coming into the confidence of Christ, and what is engaging Him peculiarly?

AJG Quite so, and then that we pray, and the glory then is God's. It is not that we effect anything and bring about results. The glory is all God's, and the attitude we take is prayer, and He answers our prayers.

HFN Have you any thought in relation to praying "in my name" corresponding with praying in the Holy Spirit? Would it be the current of the Holy Spirit in the same character?

AJG It must be. But I suppose when it comes to asking "in my name," as we have in chapter 16, it involves a double thought. First of all in our approach to the Father we always have to bring in the name of Christ; it is a recognition of His mediatorial position and that the access we have is through Him; but also "in my name" involves that we are praying in relation to His interests.

HFN Yes, indeed. So that our position here in His name is that of stewardship, is it not?

AJG I think so.

MPS As to the expression "My words," does that involve only what the Lord said when He was down here, or does it include what He is saying now?

AJG I would think it includes what He is saying now. It has been remarked that "the words" are the detail of "the word." The Lord speaks in chapter 14 of "the words which I speak to you" (verse 10), and then, in verse 23, He says, "If anyone love me, he will keep my word." Whatever the Lord is pleased to say at any time would be His "word." It is a question of our acquiring intelligence, as going on with the Lord, from whatever He may say at any time.

GCS Peter says in John 6: 68, "Thou hast words of life eternal."

AJG Yes. The Lord says in the gospel, "The words which *I* have spoken unto you are spirit and are life," chapter 6: 63. Hence the great value attaching to the Lord's words. The words which He spoke down here we have a record of. In the principle of it the words would be extended to what we have now.

EBL Is "Abide in me" a command?

AJG It is a command. The Lord is showing the imperativeness of it.

HAH Would you give us a word as to prayer to the Lord and to the Father? In chapter 14: 14. He says, "*I* will do it," in chapter 15: 7, "It shall come to pass to you," and in chapter 16: 23, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father ... he will give you."

AJG I think in Christianity we have liberty either to pray to the Lord or to the Father, and in all these things the Spirit helps us so that there is liberty and intelligence, but I think the Lord is specially stressing in chapter 16 the importance and value of praying to the Father, because it means He is placing us, really, in the same position that He was in as in testimony here.

AH He says "Ye shall ask what ye will," chapter 15: 7. Is that not a very extensive word the Lord has given us?

AJG It is. It seems to me that the enemy cannot possibly withstand this, if only we can grow in acceptability to the Father so that our prayers are heard, and develop in spiritual intelligence. There is nothing the enemy can do to oppose the testimony that will not all be met.

HDT It is contingent upon our abiding in Christ.

AJG It is.

JSE Is there not a suggestion in the address to Philadelphia that the Lord is not judicial in what He says to it? He speaks of these matters, "My word," and then the detail, "the word of my patience."

AJG Quite so. I think what you say is right and good, that the Lord is not in a judicial attitude to Philadelphia, and He speaks of His word in a general way, "Thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word." The "word of my patience" is what comes from day to day throughout the whole period that we have to go on in patience.

JSE And is there not in that assembly peculiar fruit?

AJG There is, in that every thought of God regarding the assembly is answered to, would you say?

JSE Yes. And then in effect there is testimony in that way.

AJG Quite so.

FWK Does the expression, "It shall come to pass to you" (verse 7), involve patience and the matter of process, or would you think it means immediate response?

AJG I do not know that one would have too much the thought of process, nor that it must necessarily be immediate, but rather the fact that "it shall come to pass to you."

FWK I was thinking of the prayer of Jabez, a man of God, and that God brought it to pass; as if a process was involved in the opening up of things in detail.

AJG Yes, but then that was very much bound up with Jabez. "Oh, that thou wouldest richly bless me" (1 Chronicles 4: 10), he says. But this is a wider thing than Jabez' prayer.

AH Would you think that this would go as far as the word that James gives us about Elijah, a man by his prayers able to open heaven and able to shut heaven?

AJG That is what I thought exactly, and you get a remarkable instance in Joshua. He could do what Moses never did, that is, to command the sun to stand still, and heaven answered the voice of a man. It is what spiritual intelligence discerns is the need at the moment, if the people of God are to be brought into what God has in His mind. The sun stood still. It shows the power there is in intelligent prayer that is concerned with God's will.

TJD Does the verse in John's epistle fit in with what is being said now, "And this is the boldness which we have towards him, that if we ask him anything according to his will he hears us," 1 John 5: 14?

AJG That is it. "And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him," 1 John 5: 15. I believe the Lord is seeking to bring us fully into the position that He Himself occupied. I am not, of course, overlooking that in all things He is unique and pre-eminent, but, at the same time, He said at the grave of Lazarus, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; but I knew that thou always hearest me," John 11: 41, 42. He is seeking to bring us into the position that we have always access to the Father, and are constantly heard.

JMcM Is Paul using his great access to the Father when he prays as he does in chapter 3 of Ephesians?

AJG Quite so. You may say that probably the answer to the prayers of the apostle went further than anything that he effected himself.

JMcM I was thinking that.

FMcE Would it be right to say that we get in Acts 4 a wonderful living expression of what you say? They "lifted up their voice with one accord" (verse 24), and "When they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit," verse 31.

AJG It is a remarkable instance of power coming in, as was needed at the moment in the testimony, as the answer to collective prayer in that case.

EuR Is Epaphras a good model? His prayer was "to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," Colossians 4: 12.

AJG That is very good. It shows that Epaphras was intelligent in the mind of God, and especially that he was satisfied with nothing short of completion.

HDT So that this section is confined very much to that side of the truth, is it not? It does not have relation exactly to what is circumstantial. I was thinking of Paul in prison. The Lord did not come in for him at all in that way, and yet, as abiding in Christ, he could ask what he would and it would be done, and yet the prison conditions remained.

AJG Exactly. From that standpoint it is most encouraging, because it puts us in the position where no circumstance can overcome us.

HDT I think that. So that, in the full gain of it, he speaks of rejoicing in the Lord, and making our requests and supplications and thanksgivings known to God. It does not say that we shall have what we require circumstantially, but that the peace of God shall garrison our hearts by Christ Jesus, and the circumstances may remain; Philippians 4: 6, 7. Would that take care of what is circumstantial? This takes care of what is heavenly.

AJG Yes, I am sure. So that in the passage Mr. McE. referred to, they did not pray that the threatenings should cease, or that the pressure should be removed, but called upon the Lord to take account of the threatenings, and that they might have boldness, and the testimony might prosper.

GAL I was wondering how much we are prepared to combat in prayers, as Paul speaks of it; Colossians 2: 1.

AJG I think there is need to make time for prayer of this sort, and perhaps to spend a little less time in one another's company, so as to have more time to spend before God.

JMcM So that in Ephesians 3 he makes it a point about bowing his knees to the Father. It emphasises your point about making time for prayer, to arrange it specifically.

AJG Quite so.

HDT And seclusion too, to go into our closet and shut to the door, not just as an opportunity comes about, but that it is deliberate.

AJG Exactly. Then in chapter 16 the Lord introduces the Comforter. Not that he had not already introduced Him, and commended Him to us,

but He makes this remarkable statement, "I say the truth to you, 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," verse 7. Then He seems to show that the Comforter would undertake everything, both bringing demonstration to the world on the one hand, and opening up the mind of God and bringing us into all the truth on the other.

EuR Would you say something as to the character of this demonstration?

AJG I think the note helps us. It says 'His presence' (that is, the presence of the Spirit) 'and all that He does affords this demonstration.' The fact that there are persons here who have the Holy Spirit, is itself a condemnation of the world, because the Spirit has been sent by the One whom the world has cast out. And then the fact that there is a life known among those in whom the Spirit dwells that is morally apart from the world, and entirely different from it in character, is an exposure of the world.

GAL So that life - the power of life - seems to be the great thing in testimony, does it not - whether it is the life of Christ, or in the power of the Spirit? Both go together, do they not?

AJG I think these words of the Lord show that He intends us to be entirely restful, so to speak, in the recognition now that the Spirit is in charge of the whole position, and what we have to be concerned about is to be going on with the Spirit.

HDT The testimony is not really in the saints' hands. We are brought into it through Christ, but it is in the hands of divine Persons.

AJG Exactly.

FWK Would the saints be brought into it as "holding forth the word of life," Philippians 2: 16? Would Philippians support that?

AJG Yes, quite so. At the same time, of course,

there is our side of it, so that we are not to sit down and say God will do everything. We have to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

HDT That was in Paul's absence. Do you think that is a word to us? Whilst Paul was amongst them, they had relied upon his gift and what he had said to them, and referred everything to him, and now in his absence they had to work out their own salvation.

AJG Quite so. And in that way they would come to appreciate the Spirit, and what the Spirit would lead them into.

HDT Quite so.

GCS So that in Acts 13, while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Spirit took action.

AJG They provided the conditions, and the Spirit acted.

Ques Would you be free to say a word in regard to the end of verse 13, "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak"?

AJG "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming." It just seems to stress that in His service here the Spirit is Himself in an attitude of dependence. I suppose He speaks mainly through vessels, though not necessarily exclusively so, but the very fact that He maintains this attitude, though one of the Godhead, would surely impress the reality of dependence upon us in whom He dwells.

HDT Is it not a fact that the grace of the economy is really beyond our apprehension, because the Lord, notwithstanding who He was in His Person, could say much the same of Himself, "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," John 12: 49?

AJG I think so. I think we can see that the Son and the Spirit have come in, in order to make way for God. Of course They are God Themselves, but it is to make way for God. *God* is the subject of testimony, I believe.

WSS "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak," verse 13. Does it suggest that nothing is held back?

AJG Quite so, but it is a gradual matter. He guides into all the truth. We are to move along dependently and attentively with the Spirit, and as we do we shall be guided into all the truth.

EuR The Father maintains the supreme place in the economy, so to speak. Is that right?

AJG Yes. What have you in mind in saying that?

EuR The subordinate positions into which the Son and the Spirit have come to serve the pleasure of God. But the Father has kept things beautifully in hand, and the interchange of affection is very beautiful.

AJG Exactly, it is. In chapter 14 the Lord says, "My Father is greater than I," verse 28.

HDT Is that why we have so continuously in Scripture, "God and Father," and "God the Father"? We do not have the expression, "God the Son," or "God the Spirit," although we recognise fully the deity of both these Persons. Scripture connects God with the name of the Father.

AJG Yes. So the name of "Father," and all that is implied in it, is to be that by which God is known.

JSE May I ask a question in relation to the position that the Son and the Spirit are found in, or were found in? Is it right that the One who is here in time, is to be viewed in the most lowly circumstances relatively? I was thinking of the allusions to the Lord being driven by the Spirit and carried by the Spirit. Is it safe to think of the Lord here in His own sojourn as accepting the lowliest place relatively, and now, He having gone up, the Spirit is in that position?

AJG Well, I think it is right, as long as we are guarded in our thoughts and expressions. The Spirit is here in a most authoritative position as far as we are concerned, so that we have to maintain both in our mind. I quite agree that the Spirit in grace has taken a wonderfully lowly position; and it is impressive that He should be content to dwell not only with us, but in us in the lowly condition of mortal bodies, until the Lord comes.

JSE I quite agree.

GCS Is that why we are enjoined not to grieve or quench the Spirit?

AJG Surely.

GAL I suppose one great example of the speaking according to verse 13, is the written ministry of the apostles? That was all the Spirit's speaking and opening up of the truth.

AJG I think that is right, and I think we may say that all the truth has come out, but now we are in the position of being gradually recovered to what has come out by the Spirit, after it had practically all been lost; so that just the same principle that obtained when the truth was being opened out in apostolic days, is really obtaining now, as far as I see, in the recovery of the truth. We are being guided into it little by little.

AB Is the Spirit spoken of, in chapter 16, that we might not miss one word of what He is saying, not miss one item of His ministrations? It is so important.

AJG I am sure that is it. It is most important. The Lord saying, "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you" (verse 7), shows that the Lord, as it were, says, 'You will be at a great disadvantage if you do not know the Spirit. You must know the Spirit.' Do you think there was a touch of consideration in the Lord saying to His own, "But I say the truth to you," as though there was anticipation on His part that they would find it a little difficult, and so He confirms it in that way?

AJG I think so. In the first mention of the Spirit in chapter 14, He speaks of Him as "another Comforter," in order to show that He would be to them in a sense what the Lord Himself had been. But now He speaks of Him as "*the* Comforter," as though they are to rely upon Him.

AH Does it help to bear in mind verse 12? The Lord says, "I have yet many things to say to you," but His death was going to intervene, and the Spirit immediately coming in would link on with all that the Lord was saying.

AJG I think so, and add to it. "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now."

AP In regard to verse 13, "Whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming," does that take in the whole of the Lord's ministry here and after?

AJG It seems to me it shows that the Spirit is here in that dependent attitude, as receiving communications from the Lord, and passing them on, so to speak.

JMcK Would it include what is current, and what has been brought in in the truth in recent years, the deliberateness of it, so that it is not just a matter of things coming up, but the Holy Spirit bringing certain truths before the saints?

AJG That is what I thought, and in an orderly and constructive way. No one can look back with any degree of intelligence over the recovery of the truth during the past one hundred years, without seeing that the truth has been recovered in an orderly and constructive way. And just as the saints have responded to it, something further has been given.

JMcK Would you say likewise that the demonstration which He brings to the world would be complete, and every feature of the truth would be borne witness to? So that certain matters testimonially continue with us, I mean in the way of testimony being borne before men, tribunals and unions and the like, and is it not that the believer in testimony should have the last word in these matters?

AJG I believe that is important. I think, if the Lord helps, we may come to that more as we get on to the end of the gospel, because chapters 18 and 19 are very much that.

JMcK They are.

EuR The soil is very hard. The growing darkness of apostasy is creeping in. Does not John write his gospel in view of a day like that?

AJG I think he does.

HFN Is there not great importance to be attached to the fact that the same principles come out in the apostolic day and the same principles govern the day of recovery? I think if we bear that in mind, it may be a help.

AJG I think it is a help to bear that in mind, because I think some think ministry is given haphazardly, according to what comes into the mind of the one who ministers; but when you take account of the history of the ministry, you find that the Lord has given a lead in the ministry, and that the lead has been orderly and constructive.

HFN I certainly agree, and especially the recovery in relation to the Father, and then in the exercise in regard to the Son, and now we have come into the realm of the Spirit, all bearing witness to the fact that there has been a divinely constructive ministry.

AJG I am sure. Another thing that perhaps might be mentioned is that in Deuteronomy, when Moses was encouraging the people in view of going into the land, and laying down conditions in which God would be with them, he said God would drive out the nations not all at once, but little by little. We may expect that in principle, for we shall find that the enemy will oppose all the time what is of God Himself, but that is just what confirms the truth in greater power than if we did not have opposition. Therefore we are not to be disturbed unduly by opposition in one way or another, because that is the divine way of confirming the truth in our souls. The enemies are not driven out all at once.

SEE In Matthew 10 the Lord is speaking to His disciples in regard to the position in which they would be found in the testimony, and the position that would be against them and the persecution they would endure. He says, in connection with their answering (verse 20), "For ye are not the speakers, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you." Would that illustrate how the demonstration of the Spirit takes character through the saints?

AJG I think so. That is just one illustration, I think.

HDT May I refer to another side of that? The Lord says, in the corresponding passage in Luke 12: 12, "The Holy Spirit shall teach you in the hour itself what should be said," as though we ourselves are brought in as being taught by the Spirit.

AJG Quite so.

JSE Does Paul reasoning with Felix have any connection with this?

AJG I think Felix was made to feel the power of the demonstration.

JSE I was just wondering whether it was a concrete illustration, bearing in mind that we are not just to sit down thinking that God would just do it apart from us.

AJG No. And then I think we may be assured that Agrippa felt the power of the demonstration, too.

ALRT Would it be right to say that what the Lord says about the fact of the Comforter's presence is intended to help us to a right judgment of the world, so that we are not confused, and are free to lay open our hearts and minds to the truth?

AJG I think so. I think it is important what you say. So that the Spirit just judges of things in their relation to Christ. The world is exposed of sin "because they do not believe on me." People may say there are certain attractive features about the world, such as philanthropy and doing good and so on. But the Spirit helps us as to that: the world just does not believe on Christ, and it is thereby exposed. It says, "Of righteousness, because I go away to my Father, and ye behold me no longer," verse 10. There was no room in this world for the righteous One, and therefore He left it as a judged system.

HDT And the place that Christ was given by men shows how at variance the world is with the Father's estimation of Him.

AJG Exactly. In verse 23 and afterwards, the Lord is returning to this matter of our asking, but encouraging us to ask the Father and thus in a sense to come, in principle, to the place that He filled as in testimony here. So He says, "The Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me, and have believed that I came out from God," verse 27.

MPS Have you anything in mind about the first sentence of verse 23?

AJG The Lord says, "In that day ye shall demand nothing of me." I do not understand the Lord to mean that we are not to pray to Him, but I think He is

really directing us to the great privilege of having to do with the Father in relation to testimonial matters.

JSE Is that His own way of insisting that the Father is to receive most from us?

AJG I think that is so.

WSS Does it not bear on what you have been saying about our being (wonderful thing!) in the same position testimonially as the Lord was here?

AJG I think so. In chapter 15 the Lord says, "Ye are my friends," and then He says, "I call you no longer bondmen, for the bondman does not know what his Master is doing; but I have called you friends." So that it seems to me the Lord, in this gospel, is exalting the position of testimony to a very high level, and setting us, in chapter 16, in direct relations with the Father in relation to it.

WSS So that we are to be in relation to the Father, we may say reverently, as the Lord was Himself in relation to the Father as Man here.

AJG Except, of course, that it is in Christ's name. That is, the mediatorial position has to be recognised by us.

HDT Do we understand that confidence is the basis of these requests, and confidence is really the basis of their answer; so that there are those who are filling out the position of reliability so that things can be confided to them?

AJG Yes, I think that is it. I think the Lord's words at the grave of Lazarus are arresting, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; but I knew that thou always hearest me." That is a remarkable thing, as characterising the Lord as in the position here in testimony. He was always heard of the Father.

AWT Is the richness of this section, the constant reference of the Lord to the Father, peculiarly confirming? It is the setting of not only the economy but the assembly, in that it is the name peculiar and appropriate to the assembly.

AJG I think so, yes. Have you something further in mind?

AWT Well, I was struck this morning, in chapter 14, with the constant reference of the Lord to the Father, and that causes one's mind to go to Ephesians 3: 14, "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," having the great thought of the assembly in view.

AJG Quite so.

GAL Would verse 23 indicate the general trend of our address, in regard to matters spiritual? He prays to the Father in relation to these great matters in

the light of the assembly.

AJG I think that is right. I think this chapter supports that, and would encourage us to take it up more definitely.

DM Is there a special significance in the words used in verse 23?

AJG Well, the word 'demand' is asking in a sense on a level of holy familiarity, but 'ask' is the asking of one who recognises his inferiority, and, of course, you can understand that when we address the Father there is a sense of that with us.

HDT Is it well that that should remain with us?

AJG It is well. One was thinking yesterday of what it says in Ecclesiastes 5, that God is in heaven, and we upon earth, and "therefore," it says, "let thy words be few." In addressing God, let us be careful not to become wordy and verbose, because God is in heaven, and we upon earth.

LHBP In Acts 12 unceasing prayer is made by the assembly to God for Peter, and there is a quick answer, is there not? Paul was left in prison but Peter was delivered.

AJG Quite so. You mean it was what the situation required?

LHBP Yes.

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (3)

John 17: 1 - 26

AJG I suppose everybody recognises the unique character of this chapter, which arises from the fact that it is the Son who is addressing the Father, so that there are no limitations. The Lord in speaking to the disciples in the previous chapters would necessarily be, to some extent, limited by the capacity of the disciples, but now, in speaking to the Father, no such limitations arise; so that the chapter has a unique character, in that the Son's desires come out in full expression, in a wonderfully compressed way, too. The great desire that the Father should be glorified comes out at once, in the Lord saying, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee," that being the great end. Then the principal part of this prayer of the Lord is concerned first with the disciples, and then with those who should believe on Him "through their word," and that as left in this world in testimony they should be kept, special stress being laid on sanctification and on unity, and then leading on at the end to the most precious desires expressed by the Son in relation to His own, verses 24 and 26 especially bringing in what is extremely important and blessed.

GCS Are we, in the contemplation of this chapter, in the holiest? We should be as to our state, I mean.

AJG You mean that it brings us into the immediate presence of God?

GCS That is what I was thinking.

AJG Quite so.

HDT Taking the prayer as a whole, as you have outlined the Lord's desires in the time of testimony,

is it instructive that it is going to eventuate in the glory of His presence eternally?

AJG It is, and the way the Lord commences by saying "The hour is come" emphasises what we remarked yesterday, that the whole matter is known and under divine control; so that our position in testimony should be restful, the Lord not praying that we should be taken out of the world but that we should be kept. So that we are not to be here as in the sense of difficulty - although the conditions are testing - but in the sense that we are here by divine appointment, and the whole matter is under divine control. So that this prayer of the Lord, you might say, covers all that is needed in a remarkably

compressed way; and then, having said these things, the next chapter begins, "Jesus ... went out with his disciples." It is as though the matter is laid before the Father and left, you may say, in peace, and now the period between the departure of Christ to the Father and our being taken out of the scene of testimony is to be filled out in peace, in the sense that the whole requirements of the position have been laid out before God.

EBL Would you say that the Son of God is seen in all His beauty and glory in this chapter?

AJG Well, it is an affecting chapter. It is just one of the features of glory that shine through John's gospel. We see the Lord in His communion with the Father, and it is certainly a great privilege to be allowed to contemplate it.

GAL Is it not very touching the way the Lord Jesus refers to the taking up of His own rights that He might serve in the Father's dispensation to glorify Him?

AJG Quite so, and even when the Lord takes up His own rights, it will be to the glory of God, the Father.

GAL I was thinking, for instance, He does not demand concerning the world, according to Psalm 2, but the time will come when He will. But His great desire in being glorified is that He might glorify the Father.

AJG Yes, all I had in mind in making the remark I did, was that I do not think we ever have the thought of the Lord's own rights as in any sense distinct from, or eclipsing, the Father's rights. The Lord has His own rights, but they are all subordinated to the glory of God, so that He, even when He places the saved of the nations in the world to come in their place, says, "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation," and so on; Matthew 25: 34. That is that the King of kings would leave the impression on those who are brought into blessing on the earth that they owe their blessing to the Father.

GAL Every family being blessed of the Father.

AJG Yes, exactly, that is what I had in mind.

EBL So you see that He and the Father are one.

AJG Yes, that is greatly stressed, and I think that is something that perhaps the Lord is impressing upon us, because, in our distinction that we rightly make between the Persons of the Godhead and Their respective glories and activities, there is a danger of unconsciously losing sight of the oneness of the Godhead. So, in these chapters, the Lord twice says, "I am in the Father and

the Father in me," and then again, "Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee," in order to keep the balance of things in our minds, I believe.

HG Would you enlarge on verse 1, Jesus saying, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee"? Why does it come in, "Glorify thy Son"? In Luke, when His birth is contemplated, there is glory to God by His coming into this scene. What is the bearing of "Glorify thy Son"?

AJG I think the Lord has in mind that He must be glorified in order to be able to give the Spirit. He must accomplish redemption and go to the right hand of God, in order to give the Spirit, and that is in mind when He says, "Thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal." That involves the giving of the Spirit. The time had come for the Lord to be given His place on high in supreme administration, and His first act of administration would be the pouring out of the Spirit.

JSE Had you anything of this in your mind yesterday, when you mentioned the nearness of eternity? Is this thought of "Glorify thy Son" connected with that?

AJG I think it is. We know that, in the ways of God, this period has lasted for nearly two thousand years, but in a sense it was finality that was coming in with Christ going to the Father. The supreme thoughts that were in the Father's heart were about to come in, but "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Peter 3: 8. So that really we are brought now into the presence of eternal conditions.

GCS Is this a fresh glory to what you brought before us in chapter 13, God glorifying Christ in Himself?

AJG That was presented as the answer to God being glorified morally in the Son of man; but this is, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." It is a question of giving the Holy Spirit, and bringing in a company in whom God can be glorified.

HFN Would it be right to say that there is the glory of the Father, who is the Originator of divine purpose and counsel, and that the Son is glorified in order to secure the accomplishment of those purposes?

AJG I think so, except that I feel that, while in this day in which the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is known, we recognise that the Father is in the supreme place - "To us there is one God, the Father" (1 Corinthians 8: 6) - yet I think when we go back in mind to before the foundation of the world, when divine counsels were formed, I doubt whether it

would be right to attribute that to the Father, to the exclusion of the Son and the Spirit. I think that should be attributed to *God*. Do you agree with that?

HFN Yes, I do. I think that is excellent and helpful.

SEE Do you connect this desire of the Son to be glorified, with what is said in chapter 7, verses 38 - 40, "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified"?

AJG Yes, I do, because this is the day of the Spirit in which the great thoughts of God are being made good in man, and then a testimony is maintained here, not now in the Son of God here, but in the saints. They are in the charge of the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit is not mentioned in the chapter, the chapter involves His presence here with us.

HDT The position of Christ, from which the Spirit is given, is therefore intended to give particular character to the testimony at the present time.

AJG Yes, it is.

HDT Because we do not receive the Spirit from a humbled Christ, but a glorified One. Does not that give particular heavenly lustre to the present moment?

AJG I am sure it does.

AB In regard to the saints being given eternal life by Christ in glory, is it in view of their having part in testimony here? They are in superiority to conditions around.

AJG I think so. I believe it is important, too, that the main thought before the mind of Christ in His prayer is this present period of testimony here, with Himself on high, and His own down here with the Holy Spirit; and, in order that we might be preserved in testimony, we need to be made superior to all the influences that are around us, and that superiority lies in the enjoyment of eternal life - the knowledge of Him, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is God truly known, and then the Man that perfectly answers to God also known in our hearts.

HFN I was going to ask whether you would mind saying a little more, because it is a matter of great importance. The very use of the word 'counsel' would bring in the deliberations of divine Persons. So that your point is that, in speaking of the Father as being the Originator, we may overlook the fact that it involves each divine Person having His part?

AJG I am inclined to think so. Of course, in the epistle to the Ephesians (chapter 1: 3), it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ," and He is spoken of, too, as "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1: 17), but that is in the light in which God is now known in the economy, as far as I understand it; but if we go back in our minds before the economy was instituted, so to speak, I think we must recognise that divine counsels have their source in *God*.

HFN And not exactly try and specify the Person in the Godhead? I think that is very helpful.

EuR Does the expression "Let us make man" indicate that?

AJG Well, it may do so. You mean the "*us*"?

EuR Yes. Otherwise it is *God* all the way through.

AJG Yes. It is just a question whether "*us*" is a plural word, or whether it is the "*us*" of dignity, as the king says "*we*" and "*us*," but I think what you say is right, and that when it is a question of God as the originator of things, we must have the whole in mind.

EuR The word is plural.

AJG Yes.

JMcM Paul says, in Romans 11, "For of him, and through him, and for him are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen." Would it be right there to think of the three Persons?

AJG I think so.

GCS Would "God ... all in all" be involved, too. God in His absolute greatness - or would it still be the thought of the economy?

AJG I think it must be the economy, although all that is involved in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I do not think as creatures we can go outside of the economy, as far as I can see.

JSE Is it safe to say that this circle, represented by those in the presence of whom the Son was speaking to the Father, will alone be capable of apprehending what is involved in the counsels of God, because they have the Spirit?

AJG Yes, I think so.

JSE And is that why the Holy Spirit has now found it necessary to introduce Himself in such a way that He has more scope in these last days, in view of

our reaching this matter?

AJG I think so.

EBL Why is the Spirit not mentioned? Is it His satisfaction to keep silence?

AJG I do not know that we can say much, because this is the Son speaking to the Father in divine intelligence and affection, and if He does not specifically mention the Spirit, I do not think we can say anything, except that He does not, that is all. The time of the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified. It was not necessary for the Son to speak to the Father about the Spirit, in the same manner as it was necessary for the Lord to speak to the disciples about the Spirit.

HDT Hence the importance of our thoughts, and therefore our expressions, being governed by the way Scripture presents the truth.

AJG I am sure of that.

HDT Because as soon as the mind gets on to what we thought ought to be, or possibly think should be, we may get into wrong conjecture; whereas the Spirit would lead us into the realm of the Spirit Himself.

AJG Yes.

ALRT Does the reference to authority suggest the great universal scope of the economy in its bearing? I was thinking of this expression "all flesh."

AJG Well, the Lord says, "As thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal." I think it refers to the authority that the Lord has over all, in virtue of accomplished redemption. Hence He has the right to give life eternal to those whom the Father has given to Him.

GAL Would it not be seen typically in Joseph? He had supreme authority and brought his brethren into the very place of nourishment in Goshen. The Spirit is life.

AJG Yes, quite so. But I think what Mr. B. remarked earlier is important, that, while life eternal is not in any sense limited to this aspect, what is especially in mind is our being here in testimony, and our being preserved, and the great secret of our preservation is being in the enjoyment and power of eternal life.

WSS In John's epistle he could speak of "that eternal life."

AJG Yes, exactly.

WSS That eternal life is to be continued in principle.

AJG Yes, and especially as the Lord defines it here, "That they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Mr. Taylor has often said that that involves deliverance from idolatry and deliverance from lawlessness. That is that God is given His true place as the object before our hearts, and the Man that perfectly answers to God is given His place and is known in our affections and regulates us. That means that we are saved from idolatry and lawlessness.

TJD Would you connect verse 2, where He speaks of "All that thou hast given to him," with verse 9, where He says, "I do not demand concerning the world, but concerning those whom thou hast given me"?

AJG Yes, I think so. I suppose that, when we come to verse 9 and these verses, literally and primarily the Lord is referring to the twelve, but I think we can say that in principle it becomes extended to all that the Father has given Him.

ETS Would you say a word as to "Glorify thy Son," in the first verse, and then "Glorify me," in the fifth verse? I think we should like some help on that.

AJG Well, the first verse "glorify thy Son" is evidently the Lord desiring to be given the place He was to have, as in the position of supreme administration, in order that He might give the Spirit, and that the testimony might continue. Then He says in verse 5, "Now glorify me, thou Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was." That is said in the hearing of the disciples - and, you may say, in our hearing - so that it is light in *our* souls. It is to confirm to us the sense of the full personal glory and equality in Deity of the Lord Jesus; and yet, as having become Man, He asks that He should be reinstated, if we could fittingly use that expression, in the glory that properly belongs to Him.

Ques Do you think that this is the Lord asking for re-entry to the glory laid aside in Philippians 2?

AJG I think so; it is well in these matters to keep our thoughts governed by the words Scripture uses. If we use the expressions of Philippians 2 and these verses, we are safe; but, if we attempt to put things into our own words, it may not be quite so accurate.

Rem The thought of "laying aside" is not just Scripture.

AJG No, it says, He "emptied himself." But He did that by taking a bondman's form.

WSS The note to the words "Along with" helps. It is "Along with" as to presence and place.

AJG Quite so.

HDT There is one thing certain - there can be no change in the Person.

AJG Exactly, and no change in what He is personally entitled to in the way of equality, and personal status, and so on, in the Godhead. Therefore any place of relative subordination He is seen in is what He has assumed voluntarily in the way of love, and has taken so that we might be brought to know and serve God.

AH Would it be safe to say that the change relates entirely to condition?

AJG Yes, I think so.

AB Would eternal conditions, therefore, be in mind in verses 4 and 5? As having completed the work given Him to do, He takes this place alongside the Father.

AJG I think so, and it is important that we should have this verse, so that the full personal glory of Christ should be before our hearts; and yet we know Him as a Man, and in the mediatorial position in which He stands.

HDT So that we are not said to behold this glory.

AJG No, we are not said to behold it, and yet it is something that we can know. It is just there as substance in our souls.

HDT So we cannot limit divine Persons to the places They have taken in the divine economy of grace?

AJG No.

HFR Can you say a little more as to the note already drawn attention to? There seems to be something very sweet about that.

AJG I do not know that one can add to it. It is just, I think, to impress us with personal quality and status. So that, if He is seen in a relatively second place, we should understand that He has taken that place in love, in order that the thoughts of God concerning man might be made good. But the place He has taken does not derogate from His personal glory and rights.

JSE Did not Mr. Taylor make some remark as to "subjection in equality"?

AJG Well, I do not remember it, but that would be good.

HDT Was that in connection with John 5 and 6?

AJG Quite so.

JSE Does that not obtain, as we approach this wonderful intercourse between the Father and the Son, that subjection on the Son's part in no sense militates

against the economy?

AJG No, it does not.

JSE Does not the word 'beg' in chapter 14, in relation to the Spirit being given, help us as we come into this chapter? It refers to intimacy or enjoyed equality, which could only, in relation to the Father, be seen in Christ Himself?

AJG Exactly. So that there is a note which distinguishes between the two words, "*erotao*" and "*aiteo*," and it says that the word implying equality is never used in connection with the disciples in relation to the Father. But the Lord always used '*erotao*,' the word implying equality, and He never used the word '*aiteo*,' implying subordinate relationship.

JSE Does not that keep our minds safe?

AJG It does, indeed.

JMcM Would not the first verse in the gospel keep our minds right? It says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then it says, "He was in the beginning with God." Would that help us?

AJG Yes, it would.

JSE In regard to this word, "As thou hast given him authority over all flesh" - I was impressed with a remark yesterday morning as to the immediateness or the pronounced nearness of eternal conditions, because of the fact that Christ has entered upon final conditions Himself. Is this word "authority over all flesh" to set us as free as possible in relation to what is dominical, so that we might be all the more ready in relation to what is eternal?

AJG Well, I should think so. But I connected it in my mind simply with what immediately follows, "Thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal." The Lord has rights over all, through redemption, but it is in view of bringing those who, in the Father's purpose, are given to Him into things livingly.

HDT So that the Lord's present position has a distinct bearing on the present testimonial position. He is not occupied exactly with eternity, but with eternal conditions known now.

AJG Exactly.

MPS Is that filled out by the Lord speaking on two occasions of the world knowing? "That the world may know that I love the Father" (chapter 14: 31), and then in this chapter, verse 23, "That the world may know that thou hast sent me."

AJG I think so, so that it is to become apparent publicly that the Father is supreme in the counsels of grace, in what He does in regard to man; and the way that the Lord has taken, involving the shame of the cross, was all a question of His loving the Father.

EBL Would the Spirit of God give us eyesight to see the wondrousness of this Person, the Son of God? By the Spirit His glory shines before us, but you cannot express it. It is only the Spirit who can give you the sense of it.

AJG Quite so, and therefore the importance of reading the Scriptures over and over again, and especially the gospel of John, and reading them thoughtfully, because the Spirit will impress us with His glories as we do so. Now the Lord seems to be concerned about the Father's Name. He says, "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." Then He says later that He had kept them in the Father's name, and He prays the Father, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we."

GAL The ground upon which He hands them over to the Father's care is that they recognise the authority of His mission, and the character of His service.

AJG Well, quite so. I have often thought that verse 8, where the Lord says, "The words which thou hast given me I have given them and they have received them," explains what we have in the first epistle of John as to the distinctiveness of the apostles' fellowship, "Our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The Lord was receiving communications from the Father, and whatever communications He received from the Father, He passed on to the twelve, and it put them into a very privileged position. Their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

HFN Is there a contrast between the way the word is used later in the chapter, a word which involves the testimony, and this word which involves the whole range of the divine communication?

AJG Yes, there is, but the first great principle of preservation apparently is the Father's name.

HDT What does that convey to you?

AJG If we think of a human family, a father, if he is what a father should be, exercises a great influence over the whole family. They are held in unity under the influence of the father. They learn from their father; and what their father disapproves of, they disapprove of; and what he goes in for, they go in for. I believe that the Lord, in keeping them in the Father's name, would impress

them with the knowledge of the Father, and they would love what He loved, and hate what He hated.

HDT I was wondering whether it was a little in line with John's presentation of the family of God, in that sense.

AJG Yes.

EWC Would He be the expression of it in His life?

AJG I think so. So that, in the epistle, the young men are warned not to love the world, and so on, or the things that are in the world. The Father is in great contrast to the world, and if we are kept in the Father's name it will preserve us from the world and all its influences.

SEE The Lord said, "Holy Father."

AJG Yes, exactly.

SEE Is that in view of their preservation from the evil of the world?

AJG Exactly. He is stressing that the Father is holy, and hence, if we are kept in the Father's name, it will preserve us in holiness.

WET Just what is suggested in the last sentence of verse 11, "That they may be one as we"?

AJG Well, unity is a great thought, and the importance and value of unity in testimony are a great factor in the Lord's mind, because God is one, and hence, if the saints can be brought into unity and maintained in it they become a great testimony to God. So that the Lord says, "Keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we." That is if all the saints are regulated in their outlook and desires by the Father, there will be perfect unity brought to pass.

GAL You see the expression of that unity typically in Genesis 22, the father and son moving together in the great matter before them. Twice it speaks of their going together, as though unity of mind and purpose in this great matter was laying the foundation of the sacrifice for the blessing of the universe.

AJG Yes, exactly, and you feel that, as you read John's gospel especially, and all the gospels, there is complete unity of mind and purpose between the Father and the Son - not the slightest divergence - and that is to be brought to pass in us by being kept in the Father's name. If there is disunity it is because there is more than one outlook, more than one will, more than one taste; but if it is the Father who governs the saints there will be unity.

AB Would dwelling conditions be in view?

In verse 21 it says, "Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." Is that the Father dwelling in the Son, and the Son in the Father?

AJG I think so. I think the more we read of the gospel of John, the more we become impressed with what the Lord says, "I and the Father are one" (chapter 10: 30), absolute oneness in purpose and everything.

GAL I suppose it is clear that the power for this unity would lie in the Spirit?

AJG Exactly, although the Lord does not mention the Spirit, but it is implied in giving eternal life.

FMcE Is not this unity expressed in the saints in Acts 4: 32, "The heart and soul of the multitude of those that had believed were one"?

AJG That is it exactly, just one heart and one soul, and so in Romans 15: 6 it leads up to a remarkable point where it says, "That ye may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The saints are viewed even as having one mouth.

HDT Hence the importance of holding to the divine thought in the presence of the disunity that marks the public body.

AJG Exactly.

WSS I noticed in the letters of J.B.S., a day or two ago, that, in referring to the oneness here, he emphasised the oneness of thought of the Father and the Son.

AJG The more we consider the Lord, the more we see that He had one thought, and that was that God should be glorified.

HFN Does this unity really flow out of what we get in the eleventh verse: "And I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one as we"? Is that the mutuality of divine affections that existed between the Father and the Son, and that is really the basis for the unity?

AJG I think so, yes. It is remarkable. The Lord speaks of the name as given to Him, as though as Man here He lived in the constant enjoyment of all that the Father was to Him, so that He had the Father's name as His own portion.

HDT Even at the cross anticipatively, in chapter 12: 28. He says, "Father, glorify thy name."

AJG Quite so.

Ques When the Lord speaks of the unity, in verse 11, it starts, "And I am no longer in the world." Is it to draw the attention of those among whom He was

speaking to the special affection which flowed between Himself and the Father, and that He was actually in that position - no longer in the world - yet He was there with them, and He said He was going to the Father? Do we have to get outside of these conditions to understand the flow of affection between the Father and the Son?

AJG Well, I do not know that that is exactly what is in mind. Of course, it is quite true that eternal life is a heavenly, out-of-the-world condition of relationship and being - that is what you had in mind? - but I think the Lord was stressing that He was no longer in the world, He was leaving the world as the scene of testimony, and they were going to remain in it, and this prayer contemplates that position, that they were going to be left in the scene of testimony which He was leaving.

HAH Do you think oneness is a greater thought than unity? Is there something stronger about it?

AJG Well, it is just a question of expression. I think perhaps what you say is right, that oneness is a more absolute thought than unity, because unity may mean to some minds that persons had been disunited and were not united. I think "oneness" is a better word to use in regard to the Godhead than 'unity.' You see oneness in the Philippian epistle, thinking the same thing and having the same love; joined in soul.

AJG Yes, "Thinking one thing."

WSS That was rather the point Mr. Stoney had in mind, and which I was referring to. Oneness might be the power of unity. Oneness of thought is what lies behind unity.

AJG I think it is a great thing to bear in mind that with the Godhead oneness is absolute. There is never the slightest divergence of outlook or affection or purpose between the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

TJD Is that emphasised in the two words "as we" - "that they may be one *as we*"? Is that not unique?

AJG I think so, "as we." The disciples would have noticed it, I mean, as companying with the Lord and seeing how He spoke to them of the Father and how He testified publicly of the Father, they could not fail to be impressed with the oneness that existed between the Father and the Son.

WSS It makes the thought very wonderful, "That they may be one as we."

AJG "As we," exactly.

CEJ I was wondering if verse 22 would bear on what you are saying now, "And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one"? It is an emphatic "*We are one.*"

AJG Well, exactly. The whole thought as before the Lord's mind is the importance of unity or oneness among the saints, because it is a testimony that cannot be denied. You cannot get absolute oneness in the world, because you have differences of wills, minds and objectives, and so on. Where you have the Father, the Son and the Spirit in oneness, and the saints brought into accord with it, it is a testimony to God, because God is one.

WP In connection with the construction of the tabernacle, it was said that it was to be one whole. Was there a testimony to God at that time?

AJG Yes, that is important, because it was God's dwelling place, and God must have conditions of love and unity if He is to dwell congenially; and hence it is oneness in two connections: first, the curtains coupled together by clasps of gold in loops of blue, that is oneness in the divine nature; and then the curtains of goats' hair coupled by clasps of copper, that is oneness in refusal of evil.

WP I wondered also if it was encouraging that oneness entered into the journeying back, in Nehemiah. They gathered together as one man in that open place in the days of recovery.

AJG Well, quite so, and you get it also in 1 Chronicles 12, that all Israel was of one heart to make David king. So oneness of purpose produces oneness.

HFR As far as we are concerned, does this flow from the fact that there is one Lord and that we are all baptised by one Spirit into one body, and is practical unity maintained by following the one lead the Lord is giving?

AJG I am sure of that. So the Lord stresses that in chapter 10, where He says, "One flock, one shepherd," and speaks of the sheep hearing the shepherd's voice and following. That points, I have no doubt, to one authoritative ministry all over the world, and as we recognise the Shepherd's voice and follow we enter into eternal life together.

JMcK Would you make a distinction between verse 11, "That they may be one as we," and verse 23, "That they may be perfected into one"?

AJG I suppose the being perfected into one perhaps looks on to the final completion of the work of God, and its display in the holy city. What do you think?

JMcK I was thinking that in verse 11 it is a matter of the Father keeping them, and there can be no question on that line; but then is there not this working out by way of the dispensation, "That they may be perfected into one"?

AJG I am sure of that, and so it is seen in its full result in Revelation 21, where there are so many references to twelve. Twelve is the great idea of unity in love as seen in administration. So that you have "perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." He was sent by the Father, and God has come out in revelation in Christ, and the city that comes down will be the vindication of Christ. It will also be the wonderful revelation, in testimony to God, that God has been pleased to bring man into such a wonderful position of favour and glory.

GAL And yet it stands in relation to the "believing" in verse 21, does it not? That "knowing" is in the glorious day, but believing is now.

AJG Well, exactly, so that in one sense we should be concerned about *now* - the conditions "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

CG Is there a distinction between verses 21 and 23? One is testimony at the present moment, "that the world may believe," and the other is "that the world may know," which is manifestation?

AJG Well, yes, quite so. It is manifestation, but even that becomes a testimony. That is what one had in mind in the thought of testimony. We usually, of course, connect testimony with the present moment in contrast to the world of display.

EWG In the earlier verse?

AJG Yes.

HDT Have you in mind to say something about sanctification, as running alongside these things?

AJG It is a very important matter, because the whole point is the testimony, and the power of testimony. Unity constitutes that. In view of that we have to be sanctified and that is by the truth, because any corrupting influence coming in is sure to be disrupting. So we need to be sanctified by the truth.

HG Would what you are saying in this positive ministry give us sensitive feelings in regard to things that would be corrupting in character? I was thinking of trade unions, and every effort of the enemy to bring in the feature of oneness to conquer this testimony on God's side.

AJG You mean that the enemy is endeavouring to bring in unity? He will always try to counter what God is doing with imitation, but it will not succeed. It may to a point, but never will succeed finally. The great point is that we should be sanctified by the truth, and we should understand that we are heavenly, and we are to learn it in Christ. He says, "I sanctify myself for them, that they also may be sanctified by truth."

HFN Is this really a kind of completion of the thought of sanctification? We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; Hebrews 10: 10. Then we are twice said to be sanctified by the blood; Hebrews 10: 29, and Hebrews 13: 12. Would this be the completion of that? We are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, and then by blood. Would this be the full thought, and is not the Lord's position, He sanctified Himself that they might be sanctified, most touching?

AJG It is, and it really contemplates subjective conditions in us, does it not, answering to the "sanctification of the Spirit" that is referred to in Peter's epistle (1 Peter 1: 2)? But here the Lord presents Himself as setting Himself apart from this world altogether in taking His place in the Father's presence. He sets out the truth as to ourselves, that we are heavenly, that "As he is, we also are in this world" (1 John 4: 17), and the Spirit would make that good in us, and we learn to hold ourselves as heavenly.

HDT From our side the sanctification would be progressive.

AJG It would.

HDT But on the other hand it is a most positive statement of fact, "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world." It shows that sanctification is complete, and nothing can be added to it.

AJG Exactly. In Numbers 15, the people were told to have a lace of blue on their garments, and they were to look on it and remind themselves that they belonged to God. We do not need a ribbon of blue, for we can look on Christ, and remind ourselves that we are heavenly.

AH Does the apostle have that in mind in writing to the Corinthians, in chapter 6, "But ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"?

AJG I think so. You get the two sides there. You get "In the name of the Lord Jesus," which is really presenting the matter in its absoluteness, in Christ by reason of His death; and then "By the Spirit of our God," which is really the subjective answer in us by the Spirit.

WS Does it not explain Hebrews 2: 11, "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one"?

AJG Well, it is so. We are all of one.

HDT But that is not progressive there, is it?

AJG No, and it is not exactly occupying us with the thought of sanctification. It is just that there is the Sanctifier, and there are the sanctified ones. The great point is that there are sanctified ones who are all of one with the Sanctifier.

JSE Is there not an emphasis at this juncture on the great importance of sanctification, in that the Son prays to the Father again? We may read a lot of scripture as to the setting of the thing, but is there not some marked importance attaching to it, in that the Son introduces the matter into this rich and wonderful prayer?

AJG Exactly, and therefore do you not feel that we need to read over this prayer, quietly and meditatively, so that we become impressed with the Lord's own thoughts, because in a sense this prayer, in the substance of it, covers all that was needed for the period of testimony, it is a remarkable compression of thought and desire, covering all that was needed for His own during the period of testimony.

EuR In verse 17 it is "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth." Are we conscious on occasions of this kind of their sanctifying character?

AJG I think we are, and therefore for that reason, even if for no other, it is a good thing to get to the meetings, because the word has a sanctifying power.

WSS In verse 17 how far do the words "the truth" go? Is it the full thought of what is revealed?

AJG I would think so.

EuR He emphasises it again in verse 19, "and I sanctify myself for them, that *they*" ('they' is emphatic) "also may be sanctified by truth."

AJG "By truth," quite so. We have not very much time left, but we ought not to leave the chapter without referring to verse 24 and verse 26, because we come in verse 24 to the climax, you might say, of the Lord's desires for His own.

AH Referring to verse 5 of this chapter, will you say a little as to the glory that the Lord speaks of here, and that we should behold it; verse 24?

AJG You are now referring to verse 24. The Lord desires that we should be with Him, "that they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," that is there is always that which is distinctive to Christ, although we are with Him. To Him, and to Him alone, belongs the glory of having become Man in order to effectuate all the counsels of God, and He has become in manhood the eternally loved Object of the Father, that we might be with Him in that position. But then He is the One who has brought it to pass, and in whom it subsists. We are brought into it in His life and with Him.

JSE The real joy of association would thus serve to enhance the distinction of His own place.

AJG It would indeed, and then it brings to light that divine counsels are involved in this. Divine counsel has conceived the idea of the incarnation, and the wondrousness of redemption, and the place the assembly is given in unique nearness to the Godhead; and we come into it in Christ, and behold His glory, but it is a glory that is always His and His alone.

HDT So that the link between the two eternities really lies in love.

AJG It does, indeed.

SEE As the brethren are viewed, whether as sons, or in whatever position through grace we have been brought into in association or union with Christ, there is always that which eternally attaches to Him in every circle, and the glory which will shine out from Him eternally.

AJG Quite so. In all things He has the pre-eminence. He is firstborn from among the dead, firstborn among many brethren, Head of the assembly, the only-begotten Son, in all these things He has the pre-eminence.

WSS Anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions; Psalm 45: 7?

AJG Yes.

ALRT In Canticles the speaker says, "The chiefest among ten thousand," and the note says, "strictly 'lifted up as a banner'."

AJG Well, I think so.

GAL The Father's voice on the holy mount confirms that in the minds of the disciples.

AJG Quite so. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight," 2 Peter 1: 17. That really enters into verse 26, too, because the Lord says, "That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." The disciples hearing that voice, and hearing *such a voice*, that is, hearing the very

tones in which the Father spoke - were drawn into the current of the Father's own affections for the Son. It is a most wonderful thing, showing how near to God we are brought, that we are made able to share the Father's own affections for the Son, and the Son's own affections for the Father, and the secret of both lies in the Spirit. We are possessed with the Father's Spirit, and the Spirit of His Son.

JI Would you say a word as to "Where I am they also may be with me"? What is involved?

AJG It is what is distinctive of the assembly, I would say, that we are wherever Christ is as Man. Of course, there is that which attaches to His Person in the Deity which is beyond us.

HDT Is there a link between the third verse of chapter 14 and this, "Where I am ye also may be"?

AJG Quite so. The Lord is stressing, I believe, in these words in chapter 14 and in this chapter, the uniqueness of the place the assembly has as in His affections and as united to Him.

HFN Would each element in this chapter be brought before us as really entering into the great formation of the heavenly city? There are eternal life, and the thought of the Father's name, and then the word and the great principle of unity, and then the realm of glory and divine love opened up to us; would they be great formative elements of that vessel as here in testimony, that will be displayed in glory?

AJG I would think so, and eternal life not only has great value as being a great preservative as in our place in testimony, but it also furnishes us with substance for the service of God. We become increasingly acquainted with the eternal conditions of life into which we are to be introduced.

GCS Is the thought in "I ascend to *my* Father, and *your* Father, and to *my* God, and *your* God" that He still remains unique?

AJG Oh, surely. I think we all recognise the rightness of that, that the Lord does not say, 'Our Father and our God.' Everyone would recognise that it would be entirely out of place to say, 'Our Father' and to bring the Lord in with us. It is "My Father, and your Father," and "My God, and your God."

EBL He had the supreme place in the Father's affections as Son. Does He give us the thought of the bosom of the Father where He dwells?

AJG Yes, quite so, that is what Scripture says, "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father," John 1: 18.

SM In regard to verse 22, is the glory there that of sonship?

AJG Well, I think it amounts to that, as far as I understand it, "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one." I think it means the glory of being here in the Father's interests and considering for His pleasure, as Christ was, and that really is sonship. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them."

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (4)

John 18:1-11; John 18:33-40; John 19:1-5; John 19:25-42

AJG There is much that enters into these two chapters and especially what was alluded to just now in prayer - the power and dignity of the Lord's movements into death, so that all has to give way before Him, answering very much to the ark in its going down to Jordan. What also comes to light finds its counterpart, I believe, at the present time, and that is the character of the testimony as bearing witness to the truth, and not so much the suffering side which we get in Matthew and Mark. Those gospels stress the suffering side of the testimony and the silence of Jesus, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers," Isaiah 53: 7. That side of things is greatly stressed in Matthew and Mark, but this gospel rather stresses how much Jesus speaks, and how one and another are exposed as He speaks, so that it is rather the superiority of the testimony in the last days as bearing witness to the truth. At the same time suffering is brought in, of course, but suffering accepted in a dignified way, so that it says, "Jesus therefore went forth without, wearing the crown of thorn, and the purple robe." There is much more that enters into the chapters, especially at the end of chapter 19, but it was these two lines of thought that were specially in one's mind - the glory and dignity of the Son of God, as moving into death to establish every thought of God in power, and all having to give way before Him, and then the character of the testimony. While reproach is involved and accepted, it is the character of bearing witness to the truth. Therefore it is significant that in recent years we have seen this kind of thing brought about - testimony before tribunals and before employers, and so on. It is a testimony to the truth, and, while it involves reproach, that has to be accepted. The divine thought is that it is to be a testimony in dignity and power. First of all chapter 18 opens with, "Jesus, having said these things, went out with his disciples beyond the torrent Cedron, where was a garden," and then verse 4 says, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth," so that the Lord is now moving in power and dignity. All the requirements of the testimony, we may say, have been covered in His prayer in chapter 17, and, speaking reverently, He left things in His Father's hands, and now moves forward in all that the will of God entailed, knowing all that was to come upon Him.

HW Would it be a digression to ask, in view of the part that the torrent Cedron plays in the Old Testament, particularly in 2 Kings 23, why it is stated that the Lord went that way after these things?

AJG It was the way into a garden where He was wont to resort with His disciples, so I suppose it might perhaps indicate that there is a line of demarcation between the world and the disciples, the Lord's own, in the Spirit; so that there is this garden into which He enters, although Judas comes into it with the band. There was this garden into which the Lord was accustomed to go with His disciples. It may suggest a retreat which is open to the saints, and which is entirely inaccessible in the ordinary way to the world; that there is the torrent Cedron to be crossed.

JSE Is there any suggestion in the fact that the very expression "torrent" links on with the thought of winter?

AJG Well, there may be. You mean that, as a rule, the rivers become swollen in winter?

JSE I understand that this word "torrent" here, stands by itself as implying the "winter flowing"; and the word "beyond" is over against what you said this morning. I was thinking about "Jesus ... went out." I was wondering about this word "beyond," and then going forth to meet the enemy. Is there something for us in this matter of the dignity of our movements in relation to the truth? Is it not essential to yield ourselves over to what is beyond the ordinary course of things, in order to derive strength and power to be in the truth and in the testimony in this dignity which you spoke of?

AJG That is somewhat what I had in mind. There does seem to be the suggestion of a garden and a retreat, and it is beyond the torrent Cedron, which I think speaks of the complete division there is between the saints and the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is true that it was intruded upon by Judas and those with him, but the normal thought is that there is this retreat, and I believe it is in view of the position in testimony and what is involved. The Lord would lead His own there first, as though that was to be their strength.

HDT And so today publicly the divine seclusion has been invaded, but the Lord retains the initiative at all times, and, if we are with Him, we shall.

AJG I think so.

HDT Would you say the spirit of betrayal was never more prevalent than now?

AJG Quite so, and it is remarkable that chapter 19 ends with the thought of a garden, "And in the garden a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid." Although that is near, and it is near to the religious world, it speaks, I believe, of the place the Lord has in the affections of the saints in the fellowship of His

death. That is what answers to the tomb, I think, as though the two conditions are put together in juxtaposition.

AH Does this link up with the last verse of chapter 16, the Lord seeming to greatly encourage our hearts by saying, "I have overcome the world"? Is this to lead us into this position of overcomers?

AJG I think so. One has often been impressed with what Mr. Raven said, that the Lord overcame by not surrendering. The idea of overcoming in Christianity is nothing heroic. It is just that you refuse to surrender anything that is right. You thus maintain what is due to God and by that means you overcome. It cost the Lord His death, and it may cost the saints their death, but at the same time they are not overcome - they are overcomers.

HDT Is the same principle seen in Philadelphia, "Hold fast what thou hast that no one take thy crown," Revelation 3: 11? It is not exactly aggressive but holding to that which is committed.

AJG Exactly.

WSS As to what you have been saying about the dignity of the testimony as it comes before us in this gospel, in the passages you referred to, it says in verse 4, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him." Was that special to the Lord? I wondered if dignity was connected with the entering into the truth on the part of the saints.

AJG Well, if they are moving, and moving in the Spirit, I would say.

WSS That would be included in what I had in mind. So it is a question of intelligent persons.

AJG Yes, because if there is to be dignity in the things of God it can only be in the Spirit. The Spirit gives real dignity according to God. Natural dignity does not enter into God's things.

WSS No, I was not thinking of natural dignity, but the wonderful light which is shining in this gospel, the truth shining into our hearts by the Spirit, would give that dignity, would it not?

AJG That is what I had in mind. We see dignity in the Person of the Lord and in His movements, but then the Spirit is here to bring about correspondence to that.

HDT So that what is presented to us is what is in Christ personally in a very peculiar way, and that is for our contemplation.

AJG Yes, quite so.

HDT That is perfect in itself as presented in Him, but the Spirit is operating to work out the same features in ourselves.

AJG What is stressed in the two chapters is how everything spoken before is fulfilled. It says in this chapter; "That the word might be fulfilled which he spoke, As to those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them," chapter 18: 9.

GAL Do you think we contemplate sufficiently the glorious movements of the Son of God as we have them portrayed here? He is entering into the domain of death and one feels how wonderful it is. In the book of Joshua, where the ark is referred to, seven distinct titles are mentioned, each one bringing out a feature of divine glory.

AJG Quite so, because there death was to be met in all its power. Jordan was overflowing all its banks.

EuR But the answer to that was "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?" Psalm 114: 5.

AJG Quite so. It is a note of triumph, the saints coming into the triumph of it.

HDT And whilst that is the case, we surely feel that the two thousand cubits needs to be maintained.

AJG I am sure of that. If it is a question of viewing the Lord going into death. He stands alone,

and we have to contemplate; but if it is a question of the incidents of the testimony, the bearing witness to the truth, and sustaining reproach, then we may be privileged to have a little part in that.

JGW Do we see that set forth in Stephen, especially in the end of Acts 7, after he had given his testimony, and they were enraged? It says of him, "Being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God," and so on. In other words he was quite prepared, by the help of the Spirit, to face all that was coming upon him. Is that what you have in mind, that we might learn from that?

AJG Well, quite so, but the Lord moves in advance here and sets the example. While there is, of course, the question of actually facing death, there is what is unique to Himself. Others can follow only if He goes first. That is what Peter had to learn in chapter 13.

HFN Would Paul's word to Timothy emphasise what you are saying? He refers to the Lord before Pontius Pilate, witnessing a good confession, and then the appeal follows to Timothy.

AJG I think so, and I believe that God is bringing that character of things into prominence at the close of the testimony. In bygone days saints have suffered as martyrs, the character of things in Matthew and Mark especially, but now at the close of the testimony what seems to be being brought into evidence is bearing witness to the truth, and the authorities being forced to hear the truth.

GAL So that you have in mind that one great consequence of contemplating the movements of the Son of God, is that we may overcome the world in the faith of the Son of God?

AJG Yes, quite so.

JSE What is the bearing of the last verse of chapter 14 on all this?

AJG "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do"?

JSE And then the next sentence, "Rise up, let us go hence." Is there any connection with the Lord's statement there, and what this chapter opens with?

AJG I had thought there was; but I think chapter 14 is engaged more with the inside side of things, the side of privilege, and so on; and the Lord saying "Rise up, let us go hence," would mean that He was now going to conduct them into the sphere of testimony. But I think it is most helpful to bear in mind the difference between the presentation of things in the main in John's gospel, as compared with the presentation in the synoptic gospels, especially Matthew and Mark, and to remember that John's gospel is written last, and with the last days in view.

JSE And would you say that the thought of the truth is much to the front?

AJG Yes, the truth, but God also intends that before the history of this world is closed up there should be a full testimony to the truth.

HAH Are these words "I am" most significant in this section? Would they link with what the Lord had said before, "Unless ye shall believe that I am (he), ye shall die in your sins," and "Before Abraham was, I am," John 8: 24, 58?

AJG Well, I suppose they do; but, at the same time, the fact that "he" is put in brackets, "I am (he)" shows that in the translator's mind the "he" was necessary to give the true sense. So that I suppose in the main the Lord is saying "I am (he)," that is "I am the One whom you seek," but you cannot help feeling that underlying it there is the reminder that He is the "I am."

HFN Is not verse 37 important, where the Lord says, "I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the

truth"? Is that not the only time that John refers to the Lord as born, and for this particular reason, that He might bear witness to the truth?

AJG That is very striking, that He was to bear witness to the truth, and was born into the world for that very purpose. And then at the same time a testimony was to be borne in a suffering way, so that His kingdom is not of this world. He says, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants had fought that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence."

AB Would the allusion to His kingdom be a guide for the saints, for the subjects of His kingdom; their deportment and conduct being outlined in that sense?

AJG I think so. An allusion was made just now to Stephen, and he showed that he was really of Christ's kingdom, in that he bore testimony in the Spirit of the heavenly One. Although the testimony he had to bear was a testimony in condemnation, yet the spirit of the man was in accord with heaven.

JSE You have remarked about the Lamb led to the slaughter in the pressure gospels, and the three hours' darkness being emphasised there, but now what you are alluding to is the great matter of the truth, and, as He gives emphasis to that, the Spirit keeps the item of darkness out of the setting. I wondered if there was any connection between the truth and the light in His mind, in that He keeps the darkness out. I was thinking of the Psalm, "Send out thy light and thy truth," Psalm 43: 3.

AJG Well, I think in the earlier presentation of the truth, as in Matthew and Mark, what souls need to be established in is how God's righteousness and holiness have been vindicated, and therefore the atoning sufferings of Christ, and all that entered into them, have to be enlarged upon; but now, when we come to the closing presentation in John's gospel, what is more before us is the glory of divine love, and the power in which it moves. Atonement, of course, is understood to be necessary, but it does not need to be enlarged upon. So that when we come to Solomon's day, if we enter the temple, all that was seen was gold. Love fills the whole realm, but later on you find that Rehoboam departs from God, and the king of Egypt comes up and takes away much of the treasure, and then it says that Rehoboam made shields of bronze instead of shields of gold, as though he had to go back to the basic idea of how the question of sin was dealt with, because he had got away from the sense of love.

HDT And in the days of recovery, in Ezra, do you not get the two things put close together there? It speaks of "Two vessels of shining copper, precious as

gold" (Ezra 8: 27), as though in certain circumstances that principle is as valuable as anything else.

AJG Yes, indeed.

HG How does Peter's action fit in with this, cutting off the ear of one who would be unable to hear the witness to the truth?

AJG The answer of the Lord is remarkable, when He says, "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" It is quite a unique reference. In Matthew He rebukes Peter. He says, "All who take the sword shall perish by the sword," and then again, "How then should the scriptures be fulfilled"; but here He says, "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" as though He would move as governed by His Father's will, and He has accepted the cup from His Father's hand.

HDT Speaking reverently there was quite a mutual understanding between Them.

AJG Well, quite so.

HDT Do you not think that that is really the support of the saints at the end, and understanding of the divine mind and what it has before it, better knowledge of divine Persons Themselves - rather than a mere mental grasp of an outline of the truth?

AJG Yes, surely.

AB I was wondering if you had anything further to say in regard to the bearing witness to the truth. You were speaking of the Lord as the model in the way of witnessing.

AJG Well, only that it is so marked here, for instance, in verses 20 and 24. It says in verse 19, "The high priest therefore demanded of Jesus concerning his disciples and concerning his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught always in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and in secret I have spoken nothing." He is exposing the unreality of the high priest. All these were things of common knowledge. Then one of the officers gave a blow on the face to Jesus, saying, "Answerest thou the high priest thus? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" He is speaking to the conscience, the truth shining out in all these remarks.

EuR I think Mr. Taylor has spoken of this statement of the Lord's, as to being born for this, to bear witness to the truth, as shining forward on the children

of the saints, born in the ranks of the testimony. They are really born to bear witness to the truth.

AJG I was thinking of that myself, although in a way I felt almost afraid to bring it in, because one feels that the Lord stands by Himself in these scriptures. Of course, at the same time, we are born of God, and that means that there is a generation here in whom the truth, what God is in His nature and moral features, is intended to shine out.

EuR I thought it emphasised more definitely to us each one as to what we are here for, if we really let the light of this shine forward upon ourselves.

AJG I believe that is very important. We should understand that that is exactly what we are here for, and the only purpose really for which we are here is that the truth may shine out. We have been born of God for that very purpose.

HFN Is there in relation to the gospel of John a development in regard to the truth? For instance, in chapter 8 the truth is brought in in order to set us free; and then you get what you were speaking of this morning in regard to the sanctifying power of the truth; and now we come to the obligation that rests upon the saints, as to this thought of bearing witness to the truth. Is there any development in it?

AJG I think so. We must be liberated ourselves by the truth first, before we can have any place in the testimony; and we must be sanctified by the truth, if we are to be maintained in the testimony according to its true characteristics.

JMcK Is it significant that it says in 1 John 4: 4, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world"? Would that be in relation to bearing witness to the truth, more than to the support or confirmation of the individual?

AJG I should think so. Say a little more.

JMcK Well, you were stressing a little the difference between the testimony in the synoptic gospels and in John. It seems to me very important that we should understand it. That would involve for us the knowledge of the Holy Spirit in His varied relations with us.

AJG Yes, I am sure.

JMcK So that the very greatest aspect as to the testimony would be in this expression in 1 John 4: 4, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." So that there would be no gainsaying what the Spirit was supporting.

AJG Exactly. I think it is a most assuring thought that, in that way, the Spirit is here in charge of the whole position, and especially of the testimony; so that it says "The Spirit is the truth." The more we learn to yield ourselves to the

Spirit, and bring in His power in the intelligence that He affords, the more we shall find that we are in the truth, the truth as understood by us and set out in testimony.

WSS There seems to be something of outstanding importance in what you have been saying about the character of the witness in the closing days, and that we should understand that there is so much that is untrue connected with the name of Christ in Christendom in these closing days. Would that enter into the need for this character of witness, bearing witness to the truth?

AJG Yes, and then do you not think that from the time that Satan gained the ear of the woman in the garden it is the truth that has been in contest, and that position has got to be met? Before the assembly is taken out of the scene, there has got to be a full testimony to the truth.

FWK Is that seen in Acts 1, where the Lord speaks of His own as being witnesses both in Jerusalem and to the end of the earth, the completeness, the full thought of it?

AJG Yes, quite so.

HDT When you speak of the truth in that comprehensive way, have you in mind the revelation of God and what is before Him?

AJG Yes, especially the truth as to God, because the suggestion which the serpent made to the woman, and then what he said right out, was that God was not to be depended upon, that He was withholding something good and that His word was unreliable. There was a direct challenge to the truth as to God, and now that challenge is to be met in the saints as a matter of testimony.

AJEW John says to the young men in the first epistle, "The word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one," 1 John 2: 14. Is that the truth prevailing against the enemy's power, in the saints?

AJG Well, it is. I suppose they were established in the way of intelligence; that is to say that they were sound in the truth as a matter of teaching, and were not likely to be carried away by anti-Christian teaching, but then their danger was the world, and if we are overcome by the world we do not bear testimony to the truth.

GCS Why is it that it says in Timothy that Jesus witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate and not before the priests?

AJG Well, the priests had really no right. They were thoroughly wicked, but Pontius Pilate was authoritatively established of God, and the Lord treats him

with a certain respect. Indeed, in the next chapter Pilate says, "Speakest thou not to me? Dost thou not know that I have authority to release thee and have authority to crucify thee? Jesus answered, Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above," that is He recognised him as being in a position that was ordained of God, "On this account he that has delivered me up to thee has the greater sin."

JSE Does this bear practically on present circumstances? I do not know whether you have experienced it, but one has observed very little reference to this section of the scripture, in the enquiries of the authorities at tribunals.

AJG I had not noticed that, but it is interesting.

JSE It seems to me in a simple way that it is the one ground upon which the Spirit would give us moral success before men, because, as you said, it stands specifically related to bearing witness to the truth.

AJG So it is evident that, according to this gospel, Pilate was affected, and would have saved Jesus if he could. He was influenced by the people, but the testimony the Lord bore to him was of such a character that his conscience at any rate was awakened.

AH What seems to overwhelm him, according to John's record, is "If thou releasest this man, thou art not a friend to Caesar." Is it the world that becomes a test?

AJG Yes, quite so.

GCS Has it not been the government that has brought in the relief of conscientious objectors? It is from the authority and not from the religious people, is it not?

AJG Oh, it is, surely.

GCS I was supporting what you were saying as to the authorities in this world that God has set up.

AJG Yes.

AH Would you say a word with regard to John's record as to where he went himself, and his action in bringing in Peter? I was wondering whether you were thinking of what you remarked earlier as to the testimony being to the authorities that were established of God, and of what is said in chapter 12, where Jesus left the religious system and went away and hid Himself from them. Has that any bearing on the failure that occurs here?

AJG It seems to me that John is making known that it was he who brought Peter in. The other evangelists do not record this. I think he is doing his best

to take the blame on himself, to some extent at least. I think it is love in John that is seeking to modify things for Peter by acknowledging that he had a certain responsibility in bringing him into a place for which he had not faith.

HDT So that Peter and John are together. Mary Magdala knew where to find them - which shows that love was effective; and they were together in the beginning of Acts, too. It shows that love operating holds persons together.

AJG Yes, quite so.

APA How do you regard the close of Acts 16, in the light of what you were saying as to the dignity in testimony?

AJG Paul saying "Let them come themselves and bring us out," do you mean?

APA Yes.

AJG Well, it was a testimony to their conscience as to what was right, a testimony to righteousness.

JSE And they respected it.

AJG Yes, they did. It was a question, I suppose, of making them feel the power of the testimony. The jail had been shaken to its foundations by an earthquake, and the apostle would confirm it by insisting on what was righteous.

JSE Does that help us in relation to what was said, you remember, in the meetings on Philipians in 1936? It was powerfully remarked that there was no religious obstruction when Paul and Silas came into Europe. So that it seems that directly the truth was brought to bear on the consciences of those officials, they respected the position that Paul and Silas were in, and that they were wrongfully imprisoned, and they came and brought them out. But in this chapter that we are reading, have we not the extremeness of the hostility of what is religious, and their making, so to speak, a cat's paw of the secular power to gain their ends?

AJG Yes, we have.

AST Is it not a great encouragement that the scripture says that nothing can be done "against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13: 8), showing that the truth itself always prevails?

AJG I think so. So that if Jesus is made to wear a crown of thorns and a purple robe, it is but a final exposure of what man is. The Son of God has been presented to them in testimony, and they treat Him in that way, and therefore there is a complete exposure of what man is. In chapter 19, verse 17, it says "and he went out, bearing his cross, to the place called place of a

skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha; where they crucified him." That is that the matter is complete, the exposure is complete. It is the place of a skull, that is what man is morally, as empty and as hideous as a skull, and there He is crucified; so that that man may be entirely removed judicially in judgment, and the way opened for divine love to come out.

HDT It would almost seem from this account that the Lord chose the place to go. I do not know whether that is going too far, but it seems as though it is according to divine arrangement that Golgotha was the place.

AJG I am sure of that. It is significant that all the four evangelists mention this - the place of a skull. There are not very many details that are recorded in all four gospels, but this is one of them.

HFR Would you say something as to the superiority of Jesus in these passages? You referred to it in your opening remarks. Even in the verse you quoted - verse 5 of chapter 19 - it says, "Jesus therefore went forth without, wearing the crown of thorn," and then in verse 17 it says, "He went out, bearing his cross."

AJG I thought that was in keeping with the presentation of Christ as the Son of God. He is moving in dignity and power, and, in a sense, no one can stop Him. In other gospels He may be led as a lamb to the slaughter, but here He moves out in His own greatness, accepting the reproach fully, and going to the place of a skull where He was crucified, but it was the Son of God moving there.

FVW Going back to your earlier remarks, that before the end of the dispensation there will be witness borne to the truth, do you think it will be specially to the secular authorities? I was thinking of the fact that so much is said in the latter part of Acts as to Paul's defence, which is before the secular authorities.

AJG Yes, I think so. God has established them in their position and I think He pays a certain respect to them there. In fact the Roman Empire has had a certain regard for the moral law of God, so that Roman law is largely based on the Mosaic law, and I believe God would give them a certain respect and a certain advantage in that way, by a testimony being borne to them in power.

GCS And He uses them as one of the powers to restrain evil.

AJG Yes. He does.

FVW I was thinking a little on that line, that they have been used to afford circumstantial protection to the saints. It would seem that there is a moral obligation that this testimony should be rendered to them before the finish.

AJG Yes, and, of course, their final rejection of it completes the exposure of the world, so that there is a moral basis laid in the testimony borne for the final judgment of the world.

EBL I was thinking that in the last chapter Jesus was standing but in this chapter Jesus is walking, and that is the way in which John Baptist draws attention to Him.

AJG Well, in the main, the Lord is presented as in movement in John's gospel, and we are to follow. That is the great line in this gospel, that the Lord is in movement and we are to follow Him in His movements, and as we follow Him in His movements there is a great opening up of the truth before us.

HDT In that way Pilate's word is made to serve, "Behold the man." It must strike a chord in every heart.

AJG Exactly, and then he says, "Behold your king," and the Man underlies the king, does it not?

HDT It does, indeed. It says in Isaiah 32: 1, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment," and then immediately it follows, "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind."

AJG Yes.

AWT John, in his second epistle, says, "for the truth's sake which abides in us and shall be with us to eternity." Is that beautiful confirmation of the vital link there is between the truth and those maintained by the Spirit? For the Spirit is with us and will be with us to eternity.

AJG I thought that. I believe that is really an allusion to the Spirit, "for the truth's sake which abides in us and shall be with us to eternity."

AH Would that explain the verse in chapter 18, "Every one that is of the truth hears my word"? It is a striking expression. He does not say 'Every one born of God ... ', but "Every one that is of the truth ... ", as if there has been that inward operation of the truth by the Spirit of truth, producing the ear that hears. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear," the Lord says; Luke 8: 8.

AJG Yes, I think that is good.

EBL Is the emphasis on the "the"? "Behold *the* man." It is the only time it is put like that, and yet it is *the* Man.

AJG Well, quite so. It is a remarkable thing that God ordered that Pilate should thus speak, "Behold *the* man."

HFN Does not James refer to the fact that we have been begotten by the truth? Peter says "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God," 1 Peter 1: 23. John says that we have been born of God; but does not James emphasise that we have been born of the truth?

AJG Yes, "According to his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a certain first-fruits of his creatures," James 1: 18.

JSE Could I come back for a moment to this enquiry of Mr. T., and your reply to it, as to the allusion to the Spirit in the second epistle of John? Were you thinking of the statement in the first epistle that the Spirit is the truth?

AJG Yes, I think so. The truth is not exactly doctrine, although the doctrine keeps it in our minds, within proper limits, but really substantially the Spirit is the truth.

HDT It involves formation in the saints, does it not?

AJG It does involve that, and it involves intelligence, too, in the Spirit; so that, if we really learn to move in the Spirit, we shall be safe, and we shall never go to extremes or anything of that sort.

HDT May I ask, in regard to this passage, whether you have anything in mind in relation to the stress on the Nazaraean, as bearing on the present moment?

AJG Only that the two things go together, the power and dignity of the testimony, but the reproach connected with it.

HDT And the full acceptance of it.

AJG Yes.

ALRT In verse 20 it says, "For the place of the city where Jesus was crucified was near." Would that suggest that although it is the secular power that is acting here, yet the religious centre is not far away? They are really sympathetic with the antagonism that is expressing itself.

AJG I think that is so. I think that appears again at the end of the chapter, that we are very near in our position in testimony to the religious system, and that is hostile.

HFN Would you say a word in regard to this unique reference to those who were standing by the cross of Jesus? Is that the love that really marks the public position today?

AJG I am glad you brought that in, because it is really what should mark us. It is our position, and these women are mentioned as in that position, the

mother of Jesus, and her sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala, showing that it is a position that is maintained in the power of affection, in outward weakness but it is maintained.

HFN Would there be something in the fact that these relationships are brought in? The first one is a woman who is a mother, the second is a sister, the third is a wife, and, I suppose, we might bring in Mary of Magdala as the Lord's greatest lover. Would these relationships enter into the affections that would be prepared to take up the shame and scorn of such a position?

AJG I think that is right. It is stressing the idea of affection as underlying the position. I suppose this standing by the cross of Jesus is to work out especially in the way we go on in our meetings, in the refusal of the first man and so on, and the full committal to the Spirit, for it is only thus that the cross is fully stood by.

HDT Would all having the same name have some significance?

AJG You mean that the name signifies the element of bitterness?

HDT I wondered whether it was the culmination of wilderness exercises. We start with Marah as soon as we come out of the world, and as going on with God we are thus confirmed. Thus there is a kind of affinity between us, on the ground of experience and knowledge of God.

AJG Quite so.

JSE Does this thought of standing by involve what is deliberate, rather than being forced into it?

AJG It does, and you wonder sometimes that there are not more saints prepared to take the path of separation, but it is just that personal love for Christ, and the desire to be pleasing to Him, and to be governed by His will, are not sufficiently developed.

JSE Is it because we focus more on the crown of thorns, and leave the purple robe a little out of our view? For is it not a fact that it is not taken off in this gospel?

AJG Quite so. You mean that, while there is a crown of thorns, and the reproach suggested in it, there is real dignity in the suffering position?

JSE Yes, and the testimony to His universal title is carried right through, and they stand by that.

AJG Quite so.

AH Is Paul giving expression to this truth, when he says in 1 Corinthians 2: 2, "I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"? In principle is he standing by the cross amongst the brethren?

AJG That is exactly the position, as I understand it, and it is really on that basis that the truth of the local assembly is developed. So that this standing by the cross of Jesus is to be worked out in all our localities in the definite refusal of the first man, and the bringing in entirely of all that is of Christ by the Spirit.

AB Is that why there is the allusion to John as standing by in love? Is he viewed as one who is particularly reliable in these circumstances?

AJG I think so. One's impression is that from chapter 13 to the end of the gospel, except in the last chapter where he is amongst the seven who go fishing, John stands for the work of God which will go right through. Peter stands more for the public responsible position, marked by failure, but finally recovered.

HFN Is there a great challenge to us in relation to the fact that the Lord can commit His mother to John? Does not the Lord always commit to us what we are equal to as the fruit of the work of God?

AJG I think so, but what have you in mind in relation to His mother? What is your application to that?

HFN I suppose His mother would really represent the Lord's earthly interests. I was only thinking of the general principle of how the Lord commits things. For instance, the body of Jesus is committed into the hands of two disciples, but His mother is committed into the hands of John.

AJG Yes, that is very interesting.

JMcK I was going to ask, as to this reference to the cross of Jesus, whether it is distinctive in that it presents the Lord as still in control. Everything is at the disposition of love.

AJG That is very striking in this chapter. Everything is in the Lord's hands, and it says, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now finished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, says, I thirst." That is that there was just one scripture remaining unfulfilled, and in order that it should be fulfilled Jesus says, "I thirst." Then it says, "When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit." It is a most significant presentation of the Son of God carrying everything through in His own power and deliberateness. It was the final act of bitterness on the part of man, and the Lord accepts it. He would accept fully all that was

involved in the exposure of man, but all was out now and He bows His head and gives up His spirit. All that man is is fully exposed. He enters into death and lays down His life that the history of that man might now be ended.

GCS He is incapable of ministering refreshment to God. The Lord said to the woman, "Give me to drink," and that is only possible by the Spirit.

AJG Quite so.

HFN Would you say a word, before we close, in relation to the present understanding of the piercing of the Lord's side, and the emphasis on the fact that it is the disciple whom Jesus loved who is the one who bears witness to this fact? We have a presentation - a first-hand witness to it. Would you say how that bears on what has occupied us this afternoon?

AJG Well. John makes a great deal of the importance of a credible witness, and I suppose that is an element in the truth. What have you in mind?

HFN It was just that what is said in John's epistle is brought in with regard to witness. What you have been presenting to us this afternoon is the witness with regard, to the truth, and now there is this special witness with regard to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and it is taken on by the Spirit and incorporated in the epistle.

AJG Exactly. It is a most touching effect of the death of the Son of God that expiation has been made, and the basis laid for redemption; and there is moral cleansing in His death, too, so that we may be brought in in His love into the relationships which God has in mind for us.

JMcK Would it be right to link the word which says, "Immediately *there came out* blood and water," with the same kind of movement that belongs to the Son of God as *going forth*? I was thinking of this wonderful demonstration, the water and the blood *came out*. It was God's answer, was it not?

AJG Yes, I think so, and everything is under divine control, so that they are not allowed to break the legs of Jesus. That is a most wonderful presentation, and then there is this wanton act on the part of the soldier so that there should be this testimony to the efficacy of the death of His Son, and "immediately there came out blood and water."

HDT The blood was really required to be shed.

AJG It was.

HFR Has it in mind the removal of the man?

AJG Yes, it has, and the making propitiation in the blood.

HDT I was going to ask whether there was a reference to the passover in the fact that not a bone of Him was to be broken.

AJG I think there is. It is Exodus 12 which is alluded to, and one of the Psalms.

HDT I wondered whether that would keep a certain balance in our souls, as we are in the presence of what we have here, and the exalted character of the truth is brought to bear upon us. What we have recorded is simple and elementary, and yet the death of Christ is the sacrificial basis for all God's operations, and we are confronted with that here.

AJG I am sure that is right.

HDT I wondered whether it would help us to be simple. We have tended to keep the presentation of the truth in compartments, without much connection, but Scripture often brings in something which seems at the moment to be extraneous. I wondered whether it would keep us flexible in our minds.

AJG I am sure what you say is right and important. I was wondering, too, whether there was any suggestion in the fact that it is at this point that the Spirit of God stresses the thought that not a bone of Him shall be broken. It perhaps suggests to us that the whole structure of the truth is to be maintained. No part of it is allowed to be broken.

AED It alludes to righteousness, does it not? "Not a bone of him shall be broken" refers to Jesus Christ as the righteous One. Although He met every moral claim for God, He is there the righteous One.

AJG That is true undoubtedly, and His body, His personal body, was precious to God, and in that sense you might say God would not allow a bone to be broken; but I believe there is a wider thought, and it is that the Son of God has come in to carry through every thought of God in power, and we are to take on the idea that not a bone of His is to be broken, and the whole structure of the truth is to be carried through and maintained.

EuR He had said, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment of my Father," John 10: 17, 18. That would emphasise what you were saying as to every iota of this being under divine control.

AJG Exactly, and all in the hands of the Lord, so that He delivers up His spirit. Having entered into manhood, He would not do that without authority from His Father. He had authority to do it, and He delivered up His spirit.

GCS Would you say a little as to "After these things ... " the effect on Joseph and Nicodemus?

AJG You get immediately the thought of the fellowship of Christ's death brought in, and a very dignified fellowship it is. It is the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and you get these two men, men of some distinction, moving under the impulse of the death of Christ in this wonderful fellowship. It is the body of Jesus which they took. It is really the fellowship of Christ's death in the dignity of it.

GCS They move as being liberated from what is social and what is religious.

AJG Yes, quite so.

JGW May I ask a question as to the repeated reference to the Scriptures, entering into the chapter we have been reading? Has that any bearing upon our witness, that we should be acquainted with the Scriptures, and bring in the Scriptures as the authority for the maintenance of what we say with regard to the truth?

AJG Well, I think that is right. It is important because the Scriptures carry their own authority, provided they are used in the Spirit. That is the important thing - that they are used in the Spirit.

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (5)

John 20: 1 - 31

AJG I think it might be said that the great subject of the chapter is "*The first day of the week.*" That is it is an entirely new beginning, and points to the new and heavenly character of Christianity, really, in principle, the eternal day, which, of course, we may touch in the Spirit every first day of the week. The chapter begins with the first day of the week, and then again in verse 19, it says, "When therefore it was evening on that day, which was the first day of the week," so that it seems to me that, the chapter is opening out what belongs essentially to Christianity in its wondrous distinctiveness, and the heavenly relationships which belong to it. And it is setting out the orderly way in which the full thought connected with it has been reached in the opening up of the truth, so that it begins with "Mary of Magdala comes in early morn to the tomb, while it was still dark," verse 1. That is the day had commenced, but the full light of it was not yet, it was just beginning to dawn. Then it proceeds right through to the end of the day when the full light is shining, and I think there is no doubt that that is where we are now, and I thought we might get a little help together in the first place by tracing the way that the light has gradually developed, until we have been brought into the full light that is proper to this eternal day. Mary of Magdala is, of course, the great outstanding figure, representing affection for Christ that must have the Person of the Lord, and, therefore, it is fitting to take her up as representing the assembly, but bringing in Peter and John also, and then the rest of the brethren, because the assembly is in mind and not the individual.

GCS Is this the basis for our keeping the first day of the week, the Lord's day?

AJG It is distinguished in that way. It is the Lord's day, attaching a certain dignity and authority to it. It is not called the Lord's day here, which, I suppose, would refer more to what it is as contrasted with the other days of the week, but this is the first day of the week, that is it is something entirely new and superseding all that has gone before.

GAL Had you in mind not only the setting aside of the Jewish system, but the opening up of what stands connected with the original thoughts of God?

AJG Yes, exactly, and how we are to be brought into it intelligently. So the first part of the chapter makes a great deal of the tomb - I think there are nine references to the tomb - as though the opening up of the light has commenced with a growing appreciation of all that is involved in the death of

Christ. Then, that being apprehended, the Person of Christ comes into view and there are no longer any references to the tomb. I believe there has been a certain orderly way of entering upon the truth, the increasing appreciation, on the one hand, of all that is connected with the death of Christ, and then the Person of Christ as Firstborn from among the dead and His personal glory coming before us.

HDT In that way does Mary Magdalene represent the state of soul capable of receiving the light, as it increases?

AJG Yes, I think so. You might say that in the beginning Peter and John represent the intelligent side of things, and Mary of Magdala more the affectionate side of things, but in the end she embraces both ideas and then becomes more intelligent than they because she has a message direct from the Lord.

HDT It says that "She stooped down into the tomb," verse 11. I wondered whether she became absolutely and entirely identified with the death of Christ in that sense.

AJG Quite so.

SEE Do you think that, in the unfolding of the truth, in the peculiar light in which it was unfolded in Acts 20, on the occasion of the brethren being gathered together with Paul at Troas, it is significant that the occasion is described as "the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread"; and then it began, and continued on till midnight, and ended at the break of day? (Acts 20: 7 - 11). I was thinking of your remarks as to the first day of the week as giving character to Christianity, and the extension of the light, and the unfolding of the truth in that peculiar light.

AJG Yes, quite so. So that there was that long discourse of Paul's which, I suppose, we may understand as being an unfolding of the truth.

EBL Does Mary become a sample of the personnel that form the assembly after she had received the Lord's communication?

AJG Yes, I would think so. That is one thing that comes into the chapter, that the truth is to be the property of the assembly, and that we must be together in the appreciation of it. So that Peter and John and Mary Magdalene are all brought together at the beginning; and, as has often been pointed out, John (although not named) runs faster than Peter, that is, some of us are able to apprehend the truth more quickly than others, but Peter, on the other hand, goes further into things than John. We have to learn to get on together, and to

merge together and get the value of each other, all that enters into the constitution of the assembly.

GAL Is it not remarkable that Mary is the first one to *run* (verse 2), showing her devotion of heart?

AJG Well, it is very striking what energy the chapter shows.

HFN Would you say a little more about the personnel of the saints, and the relation of the death of Christ to the development of the truth in this chapter, first in relation to the truth of the death of Christ, and then to the Person of Christ, as applying it a little to the present moment?

AJG It is noticeable that down to verse 11 we get frequent allusions to the tomb, and after that we hear no more about the tomb, but immediately after that - or practically immediately after that - the Lord Himself comes into view. In verse 4 we find it said that "The other disciple ... came first to the tomb, and stooping down he sees the linen cloths lying; he did not however go in." Then Simon comes and sees something more, "The linen cloths lying, and the handkerchief which was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a distinct place by itself" (verse 7), and then further Mary stoops down, and she sees "Two angels sitting in white garments, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," verse 12. I thought all that was very suggestive of the truth gradually opening up as the death of Christ becomes the subject of enquiry. Would you say that?

HFN I would indeed. Would that have its bearing in relation to the holy sufferings of the Lord, in relation to the Supper, and what has come into peculiar prominence in relation to His Person?

AJG I think so. I think one can see, looking back a little over one's impressions of the course of the testimony during the past, perhaps sixty years, that in the early days there was necessarily great stress laid on the fact of righteousness having been established in the death of Christ, and that would be the linen cloths lying, a testimony of righteousness established in the death of Christ, because all that is to follow must be firmly founded. Then we get the linen cloths lying and the handkerchief that was upon His head, that is that attention was being called to the distinction of the glory of the Person who has lain in death, because the handkerchief was in a distinct place by itself.

HFN I think we were all impressed by your remark yesterday in relation to the fact that the same principles that marked the truth as coming out in the apostolic day marked the recovery. I was wondering whether you had that in

mind in this chapter, that in the opening out of the truth the same principles that marked the recovery are to come into the present time.

AJG I think that is so. Just as far as one has been able to observe from one's own experience and from what one has read and heard, I think we can see that the recovery of the truth has proceeded in an orderly way. It started in laying a basis firmly in what was fundamental in the establishment of righteousness in the death of Christ and every moral question met there, and then other things could be developed out of that.

HDT Would you agree that, whilst that is the way in which the truth is being developed historically, it is also the way we travel in our souls?

AJG Exactly. It is not exactly the line of God's purpose being immediately brought into view, but the way that those who are in His purpose are being brought into it experimentally.

HDT So that there is need for ministry that gathers it all up in an intelligent way for the generation that is present?

AJG Yes, exactly.

ETS Would you go on to what you were saying as to what is seen in the tomb, "Two angels sitting in white garments, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," verse 12.

AJG Before we come to that, the second distinctive feature was "The handkerchief which was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a distinct place by itself." That is Peter's attention is drawn now to that which spoke to him of the head of Jesus, that is, the personal glory of the One who had lain in death, and that means that resurrection must come into view. "They had not yet known the scripture, that he must rise from among the dead" (verse 9), and that it was not possible that He should be holden of it. All God's purposes are coming into view because of the fact that He had lain in death, and He must come out of it.

EuR It says earlier in this gospel, "I am the resurrection and the life," John 11: 25.

AJG That is good. That helps, I am sure.

EuR I was wondering whether we do not need to emphasise burial as well as death here. I was thinking of Colossians 2: 12, "Buried with him in baptism." Is that what this is the basis for?

AJG Well, I think so. Because, as Mr. T. was saying, Mary of Magdala seems to go further than Peter goes, she stoops down into the tomb, as though, as the

truth unfolds, there is an increasing committal to all that is involved in the death of Christ; and that, I am sure, is needed if we are to reach the full thought of the assembly in power.

HG Would you say something as to "As therefore she wept, she stooped down into the tomb, and beholds two angels sitting," verse 11, 12?

AJG I suppose the Spirit of God is stressing affection here, on the one hand, and also bringing into view her ignorance, because Mary of Bethany was not marked by these features, not that she is seen in this chapter at all, but she was not marked by these features. So that, while Mary of Magdala indicates affection for Christ, she also indicates ignorance, so that the Lord says, and also the angel says, "Woman, why dost thou weep?" verse 13, 15. But it is said that Mary of Magdala beholds two angels sitting in white garments, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain, so that now the *head* is brought under her notice, and the *feet* are brought under her notice, and there is the suggestion of the *body*, "where the body of Jesus had lain." Of course, it was His own personal body, but there is the suggestion of the head, and then movement, and then the body, so that it is not now only the glory of the Son of God having lain in death and brought resurrection in in His own Person, but then there is the thought that He is in movement. It brings out the full thought of the assembly as the body of Christ, and then He is the Head, and then there is movement resulting from it, movement, of course, God-ward.

EuR Is that not the great point in Colossians 1, the greatness of the Head, "And *he* is before all, and all things subsist together by him. And *he* is the head of the body, the assembly; who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that *he* might have the first place in all things," Colossians 1: 17, 18?

AJG Yes, quite so.

JSE Had you anything further to say as to the contrast between Mary of Bethany, in chapter 12, and Mary here?

AJG One does not want to make too much of it, because Mary of Bethany is not mentioned in this chapter, but it is significant that she is marked by remarkable intelligence when she anoints the feet of the Lord, and so she is not seen at the cross and she is not seen here; she is not weeping, and in a sense she disappears from view. She seems to be marked by remarkable intelligence, which Mary of Magdala has to be brought to, and so the angel says, "Woman, why dost thou weep?" and the Lord says the same thing.

JSE All I had in mind was that they each seem to stand in relation to a climax in the narrative. Bearing in mind what you remarked in the first reading, as to

the opening of chapter 13 being marked by the Lord going into final conditions, does this chapter suggest how we are not only to understand but to enjoy our association with Christ now, and in those conditions?

AJG I think so, indeed, and one does not want to say a word to cast any aspersion upon Mary of Magdala, because it is clear that the Spirit of God is making much of her, and, if for the minute she is not fully intelligent, the Lord sees that the affection that is there is rewarded with full intelligence.

JFG Are you suggesting that these different features connected with the tomb must be entered into by us, in the power of the Spirit, if we are to embrace this first day of the week?

AJG That is what I thought, that all this comes to light in sequence as a result of occupation with the tomb. The death of Christ and the fact that He has lain in death is a great subject of contemplation, and we are gradually coming to appreciate how every moral issue has been settled. Then there is the bringing to light of all that God has in His eternal purposes, and that involves the assembly as of Him.

GAL Is it interesting, in connection with your third point, to see the place that the angels have, because that is seen peculiarly in connection with Christ's glory in headship? Ephesians 1 shows His glory as over the whole heavenly host. Here they seem to be serving in that connection.

AJG Well, just to call attention to the head and the feet and where the body of Jesus had lain - a remarkable expression "had lain," not 'had been laid' but "had lain" - all suggesting that side of His own movements (even lying in death of Himself) to bring out all that God has had in His mind.

WSS Would the reference to the Lord's remark in chapter 2, in relation to His body, be helpful? He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," John 2: 19. His disciples remembered afterwards that He had said this, and believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

AJG Yes, quite so. "I will raise it up," and that that is in keeping with what the Lord says in chapter 10: 17, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again."

WSS I was thinking of your reference to the body, in relation to the assembly becoming the temple. Would that confirm your thoughts in regard to the reference to the body in the passage which we are considering?

AJG Well, of course, in the reference in chapter 2 the Lord was speaking of His own body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." I suppose that is His own body, is it not?

WSS I thought that; but I wondered whether the thought carried on to the body, today, as the temple.

AJG Well, perhaps we might read that into it. I mean it perhaps suggests it to our minds.

JSE Is all this rich detail here given because we stand so much in need of teaching as to the death of Christ from the view point of John's gospel?

AJG I think we do, because we are involved in moral questions which must be solved; but on the other hand there is the line of God's purpose, and often we find it not too easy to see how the two lines are reconciled. At the same time I think the more we contemplate the way that the Son of God has entered into death, we see how fully every moral question has been settled, and then God is able to bring to pass His thoughts by operating in a sphere of life, and bringing in life and quickening in relation to Christ, quickening us with Christ.

GAL In that way would you say that when the Lord Jesus said, "Mary," He was speaking as the Son of God in power, and quickening her by the sound of His voice?

AJG I think that would be right. She immediately responds, so that life immediately comes into view in her, you may say.

HDT Would you also agree that, whilst a new phase was before the Lord, and indeed before Mary, that the word "Mary" would imply the previous history that is given us in the gospels? The line of purpose is entered upon, do you not think, as the soul is enriched by experience in a moral sphere? I was thinking of your speaking of the moral line, and then the line of purpose. The line of purpose is by itself and distinct, and yet in the ways of God we are to enter upon that as enriched by experience with Him in the sphere of moral exercise. So when the Lord called her "Mary," all her previous experience with Him would be called into activity, would it not?

AJG Quite so. It is what she was, you might say, as an individual, in her own soul history; but, when you say that all that was connected with her morally came into view, it is not the past history that comes into view, for that has been closed up, but her knowledge of Christ that has been acquired in it.

JSE Is there need of teaching, in this connection, for ourselves?

AJG Exactly.

MPS Would you explain why forgiveness of sins, in relation to individuals, is not stressed in John's gospel, whereas it is in the synoptic gospels?

AJG I think it is because the standpoint in John's gospel is that of a generation being born of God, so that it is entirely a new beginning. From the very beginning of John's gospel the Lord "came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1: 11), and "He was in the world, and the world had its being through him, and the world knew him not," verse 10. That is the utter incapacity of man in the flesh to appreciate the true light is shown at the very outset. But then there were those who received Him, and they "have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God," verse 13. So that John's gospel presents things from that standpoint, that God is operating from the very outset. Hence the teaching of the gospel, beginning with chapter 3, presents new birth.

JGW Would you say a little more as to the progress of intelligence? Mary, if I understand aright, is representing the assembly, at the grave position, in her soul, as referred to in verse 2, "*We* know not where they have laid him." But when it comes to the Lord's own personal dealings with her, resulting from her own devotion to Him personally, she says in verse 13, "Because they have taken away *my* Lord, and *I* know not where they have laid him." I would like to ask you whether this growth of intelligence results from a personal love for the Lord Himself.

AJG I think that would be right. I think what you say is good, that at the beginning she evidently has the collective idea in mind. She says "They have taken away the Lord." That is a title by which she and Peter and John all appreciated and spoke of the Lord. "They have taken away the Lord ... and we know not where they have laid him," verse 2. Then there is the individual side with her, and, of course, in its own setting, we must all cultivate and maintain our own individual history and links with the Lord; but then there is a danger, sometimes, of that having too much place, and there was the danger with Mary, because she says to the Lord, "Rabboni," which means 'My teacher.' It is good to recognise Him as Teacher, but not to attach Him to oneself only. The Lord would say, "Touch me not" - the idea of detaching her so that she may learn to connect herself with Him and His own.

JSE To whom did she say "*My* Lord"?

AJG To the angels, was it not?

JSE Is it not significant that it was to the angels?

AJG I think so. I thought it was fitting.

JSE She could not with equal freedom say "*The* Lord" to the angels, as she did to Peter and the other disciples, could she?

AJG No, I think not.

JSE Is that enlarged intelligence on her part?

AJG I think so, yes.

EBL Would you say that the great feature with Mary was that she loved our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption, and love divine must respond to it, and so she receives the greatest message which sets her in the assembly? Would you say that?

AJG Yes, I would.

HFN Might we have a little development now of your second thought? You have spoken of the death of Christ and its bearing. Now may we have a little developed as to the truth of His Person?

AJG The whole truth is opened up now, is it not, in connection with the Person of Christ? So that He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," John 14: 6. Hence immediately He says to Mary, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God," verse 17. So that, in a very few words, the whole truth of what is distinctively heavenly and precious as connected with Christianity is opened up, and it all stands in appreciating now the Person of Christ. That is Christ has to be contemplated as the Son in relation to His Father, and He is also to be contemplated as Man in relation to His God.

AH In connection with the Person of Christ, why does John tell us that Mary supposed that He was the gardener? Is there any moral teaching in that for us? I wondered whether the fact that she was not completely turned round had something to do with it.

AJG I suppose it might carry the suggestion that she was still looking for the beautifying of things here, and all that is seen, whereas the Lord was indicating that it was an entirely new scene, and a new order of relationships and blessings, that was to be opened up.

AH That is what I was thinking.

HFN May we not ourselves fall into the same position? May we not regard the Lord as the gardener, as doing that work? At the Supper, do we not sometimes put the Lord on the throne, and, as a result, we see Him in millennial conditions; but, if we grasped what you have been speaking of, the Lord in ascension, we should see Him in eternal conditions?

AJG I am sure that is right, and I think every heart would bear witness that our natural tendency is to long for millennial conditions, because it is nature at its best, whereas what the Lord is introducing is spiritual and heavenly conditions. We sometimes want to settle in the best that is of nature, do you not think?

HFN Yes, I do.

GAL Would it not also suggest that, while affection may give us to die with Christ, we are entirely dependent upon divine power to be with Christ, and to be with Him in the realm that is spiritual?

AJG Yes, I am sure.

AB You were referring to the distinctiveness of the Lord's glory. Do His words to Mary indicate His own peculiar glory with His Father and His God, and His glory in association with His brethren, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God," verse 17? Are there two great thoughts there, His own distinctive and personal glory as with His God and Father, and then His glory as in association with His brethren?

AJG I think so. So that we must have "My Father" before we get "Your Father," and we must have "My God" before we can have "Your God." The Lord's own personal distinction must be there, and we learn our side of the truth by contemplating Him in His position, do you not think?

AB Yes. Does not His own position draw forth the spirit of adoration, in the sense of His own unique and glorious Person, and then the blessedness of nearness to Him, as in association with Him?

AJG Exactly. So that He says, "That where I am ye also may be" (John 14: 3), and again in chapter 17: 24, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me." So that the great thing is to appreciate Christ as He is, and we shall have little difficulty in apprehending our part.

HAH Do you get a link between that and the service in Hebrews 2: 12, "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? We sometimes feel that there needs to be a change of position in relation to going to the Father. Is that correct?

AJG What do you mean by a change of position?

HAH Well, is not the assembly viewed as a heavenly vessel in which the service is carried on?

AJG Yes, I think so. I think what you have in mind is that sometimes there is a tendency to think that a part of the service belongs to the assembly, and part

of the service belongs to the saints as sons, or something like that. I think we are all feeling that we have much to learn in these great matters, but, as far as I can see, it is unwise to attempt, for instance, to distinguish too rigidly between the thought of sonship and that of the assembly. It is clear that sonship is an individual thought, and involves the pleasure that God has in His saints, and that the assembly is the collective thought and is an entity, and stands as an entity in relation to Christ, and is under the hand of Christ in relation to the service of God; but, after all, the service of the assembly is carried on in sonship, and there is no other spirit marking the response of the assembly than the spirit of sonship.

EuR Is not the basis of both that we have to take account of ourselves as Christ's brethren, a heavenly company, of His own order, finding our origin in His death and resurrection?

AJG Yes, exactly. Hence, while the chapter begins with disciples, as soon as the Lord speaks to Mary of Magdala He says, "Go to my brethren ... " He introduces that relationship at once, and that underlies all that follows.

EuR Really there is no rise in level, is there? The level of the service, if we may so speak, the level of the brethren, of the bride, and of the sons is equal, is it not?

AJG Yes, as far as I understand it, that is so.

ALRT Does verse 17, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father," indicate that all our links in the assembly are with Him in His ascended position, and not simply as risen from the dead?

AJG Oh yes, I think so. The assembly's distinctive portion is not on resurrection ground, but on the ground of ascension.

GCS What is the difference between this and Luke, where He says, "Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having," Luke 24: 39?

AJG Luke is rather presenting things from the standpoint of the actual things found among us, where there may be a good deal of unbelief or uncertainty operating, and the Lord graciously taking account of these conditions and meeting them.

GCS And Luke would be more in relation to the resurrection, whereas this is in relation to the assembly?

AJG Yes, that would be true.

HDT Would Luke take you no further than the local position, whereas John certainly does - bringing in the link the assembly has with Christ as ascended, which is not a local thought at all?

AJG Exactly, and Luke, as you say, is really the local position, although there is just a suggestion of the local position linking on consciously with the universal position, for when He says to them, "Have ye anything here to eat?" they give Him just part of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb (Luke 24: 41, 42), so that it was just part of the whole.

JSE Is the key to all this in the word that Mr. H. referred to, as to turning round? While it is not in itself final, it makes way for teaching in the soul of the subject, so that she is connected with what is final. Is there not a need for us to enter into this matter of turning round?

AJG Quite. We need to get an entirely new outlook and a heavenly outlook, because I am sure that we cling much more than we realise to what is of earth and of nature, but it is a spiritual and heavenly order of blessing that God has been pleased to bring us into.

HFN Would you say a word relation to this opening out of the glory of the Lord, in regard to the distinctive glory of ascension? Is it right that the assembly is the only family to enter into the distinctive truth of ascension?

AJG I think it must be. There are, of course, other families that are heavenly. We do not know much about them. There are heavenly families as well as earthly families, but I suppose what you say is right, that "I ascend" brings into peculiar prominence the personal glory of the Son of God. I think that puts its stamp upon the assembly's position. Is that what you had in mind?

HFN That was exactly what was in my mind. Therefore it links on with Ephesians 4, that the One who has ascended is the same One who has "also descended into the lower parts of the earth," Ephesians 4: 9. So we shall not be able to understand "My Father, and your Father, ... my God, and your God" (John 20: 17), unless we have got the personal glory of Christ in relation to the "I ascend" in our souls, shall we?

AJG No, I do not think we shall, and hence chapter 14 is so important and the way the Lord stresses "Believe also on me" (verse 1) and "Believe me that I am in the Father" (verse 11), and so on. He is insisting on the importance of believing Him and having Him before our hearts, and it is only as we have Him before our hearts that we really learn the truth of our position, do you not think?

HFN Yes, indeed. I was only going to ask you to open out more "My Father, and your Father, ... my God, and your God" (John 20: 17), in order that we might get some distinctive touch from both.

AJG I think we can see that "My Father, and your Father" must come first, and that is that we are introduced to the Father and are brought to Him in this exalted way; that we are brought to Him in association with Christ. But then the knowledge of the Father in this most precious way is really the way in which we are brought into relationship with God. The final thought is God. It is God having Man before Him in sonship for His pleasure, but the great final end is God.

HFN Would that link on with the overcomer in Philadelphia (Revelation 3: 12), where the thought of "My" is brought in five times? I think it has been said that the great feature of the overcomer is that he has the complete thought of Christianity in his soul.

AJG Yes, I think so, surely.

EuR In Ephesians 2: 6 it says, "Has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Is there some relation in that to this "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God"?

AJG Yes, I think so. "Made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" is just a position of restful elevation, and privilege and blessing in restfulness.

SEE Does the reference to the ascension of Christ in Ephesians 4 go further than what the Lord says in this passage? In Ephesians 4: 10 it says, "Who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." Here it is "I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Does Ephesians 4 go further than what the Lord says here?

AJG I suppose from one point of view it does, because in this chapter the Lord is speaking in reference to His brethren and the thought of identifying us with Himself in the position that He fills as Man. But in Ephesians the great point is to stress the extreme dominance of His present position in view of effecting the pleasure of God in the saints. So that He has gone up far above all heavens that He might fill all things, beyond the created sphere,

entirely beyond the reach of creature interference or anything else, and can work from that standpoint to bring to pass God's thoughts in His saints.

JSE Does not that keep us in holy balance?

AJG Yes, it does indeed. While the Lord is pleased to identify us with Him, we cannot exactly bind Him to us, He can go above all heavens.

EWG Is "My God, and your God" the highest point?

AJG Yes, I think it would be. It is brought in here as light that would be in their souls as they gathered together. Then the Lord coming in, in verse 19, would confirm them in the possession of the thing.

JMcK Would the way that resurrection and ascension are presented in this chapter - especially ascension - be not in a historical setting or as a matter of time, but would it not all help us to take on the elevated thoughts of the assembly?

AJG Yes, I think so, because if once we get into our souls the idea conveyed in the Lord's words, that "Where I am ye also may be," I believe all becomes simple. It really becomes a question of contemplating the glory of Christ in His manhood in relation to His Father and His God.

JMcK I wondered whether the truth of ascension, brought in anticipatively, we may say, with all the height of the manifestation, would begin with verse 19.

AJG I think it would. They would come together with that message in their minds, and they would have nothing else than that before them. Is that what you have in mind?

JMcK It was just that that I had in mind. Is there not a great need with us all to take on what is elevated and heavenly, and belonging to our heavenly part?

AJG I am sure there is. On the other hand there is the gracious service of Christ that enables us to take it on without any unreality, and I believe that is involved in His showing them His hands before He showed them His side.

JSE Is this the substantial answer to the question of Judas, not Iscariote, in John 14: 22, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world"?

AJG Yes, it is the answer in love, is it not?

EuR What had you in mind in referring to the hands before the side?

AJG It says, "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, Peace be to you. And having said this, he shewed to them his hands and his side," John 20: 19, 20. While His hands refer, I suppose, to the way love has served, my impression is that thus it is connected with the cup, because in the cup we see the way that the personal love of Christ has served us even to death, and that is intended to set us entirely free from all that is connected with the old. It is

the way love serves to set us free entirely to take on the light connected with His side, that we are entirely of Him.

JSE Is that the reason why the emphasis is on the “*you*” in connection with the cup?

AJG I think so.

FMcE Is this a verification of the Lord’s own words to His disciples in John 16: 22, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one takes from you”?

AJG I am sure that is so. There cannot be any greater joy than the consciousness of our part with Christ in heavenly relationships.

HFN Would the thought of the Lord’s hands have reference to the cup, and then would the Lord showing His side give an incentive to marital response in the assembly?

AJG Oh, I think so, because the side would remind us that He has lain in death in order that we might be brought into being as entirely of Himself, and suited to Himself, and to have a place by His side.

HDT Is it significant that, whilst the Objective (speaking reverently) is His Father and His God, yet en route - as coming into the midst of His disciples - He showed them His hands and His side? Would that be warrant for our giving special attention to what Christ has for Himself in the assembly?

AJG I am sure, because we must be confirmed in a fresh sense of enjoyment of what the assembly is to Christ, before we can enter with Him into those relationships, do you not think?

HDT I was wondering whether it would give us an outlook into the sphere of the enjoyment of the truth of union, for where that is enjoyed there is great power in our souls to go on into all that the Lord has in mind.

AJG Surely, and there is no real power to enter upon our distinctive heavenly portion in relation to the Father and God, save as union is enjoyed.

JSE Does the expression “He took one of his ribs and closed up flesh in its stead” (Genesis 2: 21) link with His hands and His side here - with His side particularly? Mr. Taylor has remarked that our place in the joy of union is the secret of any further movement. There is this thought of His side, and the type coming in as to the closing up of the flesh, showing that all that we are to enjoy, whether in association or in union with Christ, cannot be known or even apprehended according to the flesh, but only in the power of His present life.

AJG That is true. Whether that is the force of the statement in Genesis, that God closed up the side of Adam, I am not quite sure, but it is certainly true.

GAL Does not all this show how dependent we are on the leadership of Christ to enter into these blessed relationships? It is so much more than change of mind; it is a question of the service of Christ to bring us into it.

AJG It is, and therefore we are dependent upon Christ and the love of Christ. We need the support of the love of Christ all the time, do you not think? So that the bride, or loved one, in the Song of Songs, says, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me," chapter 2: 6. There is the thought of intelligence, suggested in "His left hand is under my head."

AB Would the Lord standing in the midst, taking His place as the Minister of the Sanctuary, be in the way of direction and lead, and would that focus our affections on Him with reverence and adoration?

AJG I think it is most touching what was alluded to earlier by Mr. H., in Hebrews 2: 12. The Lord says, "I will declare thy name to my brethren." That is that He has a company of those who are worthy of Himself, to whom He delights to declare the Father's name, but then the response takes place in the assembly, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises." It seems to me that there can hardly be anything greater than that.

HAH So at such a moment you would not introduce the words "Where thou art," as if thinking of the Lord up in heaven, and we down here?

AJG Well, no, you do not want to bring in anything that is suggestive of distance, but, on the other hand, I think we need to bear in mind what Mr. Myles has helpfully said, that, whatever we may enjoy in the way of union, the actual fact remains that we are down here on earth, and we cannot limit the Lord. From one point of view He is in heaven, at the right hand of God, but then we cannot limit Him in His movements; so that we have to remember that, while we touch these things and any sense of distance is removed in the Spirit's power, yet in fact the other remains true.

GCS We need the power of abstraction.

AJG Yes.

AED Is the vital link in the Holy Spirit?

AJG Yes, the vital link must be in the Holy Spirit, because it is by the Spirit that we are united to Christ and enjoy union.

CEJ I was going to ask, in regard to the matter that has been mentioned as to union, whether that does not link with what the Lord says, "In the midst of the

assembly will I sing thy praises" (Hebrews 2: 12)?

AJG As far as I understand it, it does, because if the Lord sings He sings by means of His body, that is what His body is for, speaking reverently. It is for the expression of Himself, and I thought "In the midst of the assembly" shows how thoroughly He is identified with the assembly.

AH Will you say a word now as to why, from this position of privilege, the Lord speaks of the testimonial side, "As the Father sent me forth, I also send you"?

AJG I take it that it is because the two have to be maintained until the Lord comes, the side of the service of God and what is for God, on the one hand, and the side of the testimony, on the other; and the side of testimony is to be in keeping with the privilege that is itself heavenly in character.

JSE Is that why a climax appears to be reached at the point where the expression is made: "The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord" (John 20: 20)?

AJG Yes, I think it is. It does; not develop the thought of the service of God, but just gives us what is introductory to it; actually the service has to develop in the power and liberty of the Spirit week after week. The fact that they are spoken of as disciples is interesting. They are brethren in their actual relations, but they are down here and they have to go out in the sphere of testimony, and so they are disciples.

JGW With regard to the question of seeing the Lord, why does the Spirit of God seem to draw special attention to those who had seen the Lord? First of all we have Mary, in her testimony to the disciples; secondly the disciples rejoiced "having seen the Lord"; and thirdly in relation to the testimony of the disciples to Thomas, who was missing when Jesus came, they say "We have seen the Lord." When we speak of the Lord showing them His hands and His side, is it not necessary to see the Lord wholly, the whole Person of the Lord?

AJG I do not quite know what you have in mind in stressing *wholly* in contrast to *partially*. It is just the Lord Himself whom we see, "We have seen the Lord," verse 25. But I suppose what is being stressed is that it is a peculiar privilege. The dispensation is still one of faith and that is what is being stressed as to Thomas. It is rather striking that it all runs on, it is not put in a separate paragraph, and the point in it is what the Lord says at the end, "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed they who have not seen and have believed," verse 29. The Lord is stressing the greater blessedness of the present moment, which is a dispensation of faith, so that things in that sense are not seen. The Lord does come in from time to time, and make the reality

of His presence known to us, but that does not take away from the fact that the dispensation is one of faith.

JSE Does that emphasise the need of making use of the Spirit?

AJG It does, exactly.

HDT And the continuance of faith as an active principle with us?

AJG That is exactly the point, and I believe the Lord is stressing it now; that, along with the recovery of the truth as to the Spirit. He is also stressing the need of faith on our side.

HDT So that it says in the last verse, "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name." The necessity of believing in a continuous characteristic way is stressed.

AJG It is. I believe that last paragraph is one that we ought not to pass by. "Many other signs therefore also Jesus did before his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name," verse 30, 31. His name is the whole range of glory, and the truth that is opened up in connection with Him, and we are to have life in that, on the principle of believing.

HG Does that bring us to what has been your basic thought in these meetings, that we are to bear witness to the truth? Is all that we have said this morning to lead us up to that point, that we should also bear witness to it?

AJG Well, of course, the more we are characterised by faith, the more power there will be in bearing witness to the truth. But I think we need to see the importance of active faith. That is not simply confidence in God, but active faith, "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen," 2 Corinthians 4: 18. There is nothing more important than that we should stress that, and the Spirit will link Himself with that attitude of mind on our part.

WW Is that the thought that lies behind receiving the Holy Spirit - active faith?

AJG Well, I think the thought is that the Lord was giving them His own Spirit, so that any move in administration in His Spirit would result in things being done in His own way.

JSE You mean that He says, "Receive the Holy Spirit"?

AJG It was His own Spirit that He breathed into them, the Spirit of Christ.

CHRISTIANITY MARKED BY FINALITY AND STABILITY (6)

John 21: 1 - 25

AJG The last two verses of chapter 20 seem to bring the book to a conclusion, but then this chapter is added as a kind of appendix. I think one can see that the gospel would not be complete without it. In chapter 20 we have been led right up to the highest thoughts of God in Christianity - the greatest spiritual privileges of the assembly and what constitutes our eternal portion, but then in actual fact what the history of the assembly shows, and what our own history will bear witness to, is that we are dependent on the grace of Christ, the gracious service of Christ, to bring us into these things, and to recover us to them if there is at times a measure of departure. So that the gospel seems to finish on that note, a kind of filling out of what we had in chapter 13, that "Jesus ... having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end." Whatever arises in the history of the saints, what secures completion is the love of Christ and its service. So that there is a further manifestation of Jesus; it says, "After these things Jesus manifested himself again," and then "He manifested himself thus." No doubt the incident has a certain dispensational bearing but I do not know that we need occupy ourselves with that, but it is striking that it should be a manifestation in connection with certain conditions which obviously are not according to the Lord's mind. That is, there are seven disciples, not eleven, but seven of them. We have a kind of sectional or independent movement that does not embrace the whole; having its issue in one of them saying, "I go to fish," and the others saying "We also come with thee." But what is so striking is that there is not a word of remonstrance or chiding on the part of the Lord, but the most touching expression of grace; bringing before them that He has His own system of warmth and food, and all is really to be connected with that and contributory to it. Then the chapter takes up Peter after that, as the personal object of the Lord's service so that he might be fully restored and set on lines on which he can go through to a conclusion that glorifies God; Peter being in that way, I believe, in these closing chapters of John's gospel, a little picture of the assembly in its responsible history, marked by breakdown and utter failure on the one hand, but recovered in the end to real faithfulness. Not that I am speaking, of course, of the outward public profession, but of what is to be seen practically at the end. Peter seems to come into accord with John; John going through, and Peter in the end glorifying God by his death.

HDT As entirely corresponding to Christ.

AJG Yes, exactly. It is a most remarkable thing that in the end Peter was given the privilege, so far as what was outward was concerned, of greater correspondence with Christ than even Paul, in that Peter was crucified, whereas Paul, as a Roman, was beheaded.

SEE Does the Lord expose them by the questions He asks them, He says, "Children, have ye anything to eat?"

AJG Yes. I suppose that brings to light that independent movements that have not the assembly in view will eventually result in the absence of food.

JSE Is it remarkable that in this chapter you have the only time when the sons of Zebedee are put together, but in all the positive details he refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved?

AJG It is very remarkable. It is as though he would not speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved in this setting, but as soon as recovery comes in, in verse 7, he does speak of himself in that way.

JSE Is it to teach us that once we have touched, in the power of the Spirit, the realm and richness of what is spiritual, it is never intended that we should again come under the commanding influence of what is natural, and if we do we retrograde?

AJG I think that is right. I believe it is significant that it was a movement by only seven out of the eleven, and that the Lord meets it, indicating that He has a system of His own characterised by warmth and food, and that they are to see that that is in mind in all their labours.

WSS Was their failure in believing, behind this movement?

AJG I think there would be. You are referring to the last verse of chapter 20?

WSS I was thinking of what you have been saying to us in connection with that verse and chapter 14.

AJG I think what is of the utmost importance at the present time is that we should become characteristically believers - those who recognise that this dispensation is a dispensation of faith. It consists in things that are unseen. "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen," 2 Corinthians 4: 18.

WSS Peter and the others following him would seem to have been allowing their own thoughts to govern them.

AJG Yes.

GAL Peter seems to have lapsed from what the Lord had said to him in the first chapter. If he lapsed that would cause him to take up things on a lower level.

AJG Yes, I think so.

AGB Would you say why the stress seems to be put by John on the thought of manifestation, in verse 14, as being the third time? Is there a distinction between manifestation and appearing?

AJG I think appearing seems to be the Lord bringing Himself deliberately before them in a particular light, but manifestation rather has in view the impression that was left on those to whom He appeared, so that the thought of manifestation occurs frequently in John's gospel. In chapter 14 the Lord says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, *he* it is that loves me; but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and *I* will love him and will manifest myself to him" (verse 21), and then Judas, not Iscariote, takes up the question, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?" But the idea of manifestation has in view bringing some particular feature of His glory definitely into view.

EuR Would this be linked up with the other two? Does it refer back to the two manifestations in the previous chapter?

AJG Yes, I think so. So the first was to bring out the full light of the heavenly position; the second, apart from this dispensational appearing, was to stress the matter of faith, "Blessed they who have not seen and have believed" (verse 29); and the third is to bring out this feature of His own love and the service of Christ, as that which is to go through to the end, notwithstanding the incidents that may arise in the responsible history of the assembly.

HDT And to prevent us, do you think, from returning to things that we have left, when we have received a call in the testimony?

AJG Yes, I think so, and to leave us with the sense that if we do get into the enjoyment, in any power and reality, of our heavenly portion, it is entirely due to the grace and love of Christ.

HFN Would it be right to regard this chapter as bringing in additional thoughts in regard to the Lord's glory? We have the personal glory of the Son of God; and then the chapter is bringing in, in the first instance, the Lord in His official glory in relation to headship; and then the Lord's sovereignty in determining the service of each one of us.

AJG Yes, I am sure that is right and important, too.

Rem As the manifestation was only to the seven, they would be greatly affected by it.

AJG I am sure they would. It would show that the Lord is going after them. There were just seven of them. It was a wrong move and they were leaving out of account the whole number, the whole company.

JSE The manifestation in this chapter is a manifestation of Himself, as over against the earlier part of the gospel where the manifestation is of His glory. What is the distinction between that?

AJG In Cana of Galilee He "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (chapter 2: 11), and I suppose that is a particular feature of His glory, not in a sense connected with His Person, though, of course, it is connected with His Person, but more what He can do; that He can bring in a spiritual order of things that eclipses the best of nature. But here it is a manifestation of Himself. It is, in a sense, what was necessary on account of the defection on the part of His own, and brings out the resources that are there in the love of Christ.

AB Is the gain of the manifestation proved by John personally helping the others into it? It says, "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord."

AJG I think that helps, because John, although having his part in the departure at this time, is characteristically one who is near the Lord, and a spiritual person; and it has been said by either or J.B.S. that one mark of a spiritual person is that if he fails he quickly recovers himself.

GCS Are there any appellations attached to these men, the apostles, the disciples, which should have been left behind as entering into the spiritual relationships? They are called "Simon Peter" - could Simon have been left behind? - "Thomas, called Didymus, and Nathaniel who was of Cana of Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee."

AJG That is rather striking, that there is this which attaches to each one; as you say, a kind of mixture of the natural with the spiritual.

ALRT Is there a link between the early morn in verse 4 of this chapter, and the early morn in verse 1 of chapter 20? I wondered whether it suggested that the recovery, which is brought in in grace in this chapter, is to the fulness of all that is in view in the previous chapter.

AJG I am sure that would be right.

MPS Why is there no record of the Lord terminating any of these three manifestations? In the appearing in Luke He vanished out of their sight, but here He does not terminate the manifestation Himself at all.

AJG No. He does not seem to. I suppose they are to have permanent weight and effect with us.

HFR Is the fire of coals that the Lord used, over against the fire of wood in the end of Acts? I wondered whether that would refer to the outward side of the testimony, but the fire of coals more to the work of God, and what is inward. Is that what we are recovered to?

AJG The work of God? Yes, I suppose so. It is rather significant that we are told it was a fire of coals, because in chapter 18: 18, "The bondmen and officers, having made a fire of coals (for it was cold), stood and warmed themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself."

Peter was with them and warming himself. There is the suggestion that the Lord has His system as over against the world's system, and this fire of coals would speak particularly to Peter after he had warmed himself beside the other fire of coals.

EuR Has it not been said that it was a dignified feast, "Come and dine"?

AJG Yes, I think so, and it is a fire of coals, and fish laid on it, and bread. It had all been provided apparently by the Lord Himself, and then it says in verse 13, "Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives it to them, and the fish in like manner." It has been remarked that in John's gospel the Lord does everything Himself, and this, perhaps, is the final example of it.

HDT Carrying with it an excess of grace.

AJG Yes, exactly.

HDT May I ask why such a remarkable manifestation was not given in Paul's list of the appearances of the Lord, in 1 Corinthians 15? Does that have any bearing on the John setting of the truth?

AJG I have no doubt the appearances that Paul records in 1 Corinthians 15 are specific. That is to say each has its own character and part in the establishment of the truth, but then it would not exactly be necessary that he should record all the appearances, would it?

HDT I wondered whether they all had a testimonial bearing. This was more the recovery of the soul to what was constitutionally proper to them.

AJG I think that is so.

HDT And would the feeding, and then the probing, and the report amongst the disciples and the net results at the end, indicate something that the Lord brings about in the souls of those who are really available to Him, although they may come under other influences at times?

AJG Quite so. So that it is very encouraging that we have a kind of guarantee in the grace and love of Christ that His own shall be brought into all that has been in the mind of God for them.

HAH Is the Lord acting mediatorially for us as the Chief Shepherd of the sheep?

AJG I think that would be right. Of course, Luke's gospel - the last chapter - is perhaps more distinctly the shepherd character of the Lord as going after His sheep, but it certainly appears here, too, and I expect Peter would be particularly affected by it, for he refers in his epistle to the Chief Shepherd.

AH What do you think is the significance of the Lord addressing them as "Children" - the diminutive word - and then enquiring if they have anything to eat?

AJG It is a diminutive, as the note says, "expressing peculiar affection," so that while there was, perhaps, in result a rebuke in the enquiry "Have ye anything to eat," the manner of it was not rebuking, it was affectionate and tender.

AH I wondered whether in the Lord's word there might be the thought for us, at any rate, as to whether we had appropriated all that John ministered earlier, so that we should be saved from such a move as this.

AJG Quite so. I think it is the experience of brethren, whether individually or whether moving together as these did, that if there is departure from having the assembly before us, it results in a condition of having nothing to eat.

HDT What is sectional always leads to poverty.

AJG Exactly.

WSS Does it bring home to us the necessity of being under the Lord's direction? As soon as He directs, and they cast the net on the right side of the ship, there was abundance of provision which could be brought into what He Himself had already brought for them.

AJG Quite so, and I suppose we may assume that, from one point of view, it is service that may become a snare and turn one aside, because that is what the Lord refers to in His word to Peter, "When thou wast young, thou girdedst

thymself." Girding has service in mind, but it is service as self-willed and independent.

WSS Would service of that kind always result in our descending to a lower level? I have been struck with the fact that the three names that have been given are all young men connected with the Jewish system, as if the tendency with us is to revert to a lower level.

AJG Quite so.

AB In regard to the way the Lord directs here, is it a guide, as to the way direction might be administered, not too formally, not too administratively, but nevertheless effectually, because there is affection with it?

AJG I am sure that is important. So that, as I think we remarked once before, in the great administrative epistle - 1st Corinthians - the apostle finishes by saying, "Let all things ye do be done in love." And it comes to one's mind in speaking, that we get a wonderful example of that in the way Nathan approached David. When he went to David he did not immediately give him the word that Jehovah had given him to say, but he brought in a parable of his own construction, and caused him to condemn himself even before he heard what Jehovah had to say to him. It was a remarkable touch of skilful dealing in love with one who had deflected.

HDT It does not say He sent a prophet to the king, but He sent Nathan to David. Is it not the absence of what is official that is so striking in this passage?

AJG Yes, it is.

PW Is that why the Lord says, "Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken"?

AJG This is just another example of the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus, that He accredits them with having taken the fishes. They had taken them, but only after He had entered into the matter and given them direction.

AED The fact that the net did not break - that it remained whole, does that mean that it stands out over against the sectional idea?

AJG Yes. I suppose what the Lord enters into and directs will never break down. You cannot conceive of any rending of the net in these circumstances.

HFN I was only going to ask whether at the close of the dispensation the Spirit of God is not working in a peculiar way in recovery, and how this would add stimulus to us to move in the spirit of which you have spoken.

AJG That is exactly what I had in mind, that the chapter seems to be brought in as a kind of appendix, as though John by the Spirit not only opens out all

the truth, but there is this appendix to meet the conditions that are current amongst us, and to show that in the power of the service of the love of Christ we can be brought to it.

AWT Would that enhance the present service of Christ to us in His intercession? I was thinking of this breakdown and the subsequent recovery, and the profound demanding of Jesus in chapter 17 to the Father.

AJG I think so. I am sure we owe far more than we realise to the constant intercession of Christ.

AWT We were profoundly affected by the prayer of chapter 17, and that precedes this, this being an appendix. It is a wonderful setting to the present service of Christ in His intercession and advocacy to us, is it not?

AJG It is. It seems to be the other side of the matter, as though the Lord on the one hand will intercede and supplicate, as you say, but on the other hand He will be active in grace.

JSE He speaks relative to what is normal, does He not?

AJG That is good.

HDT He secures a normal result in the fact that Peter had a commission to feed and to shepherd. That was the result that the Lord had in mind.

AJG I think so, and of course, a man who had himself experienced the grace of Christ would be capacitated to deal tenderly with others.

HDT May I quote a remark of Mr. Darby's in regard to that very thing, that if we want a man to judge himself we should approach him as a shepherd. Would not shepherding take on largely that character as having learned it from Christ?

AJG And hence that is the way the Lord moves. He feeds them well. "Come and dine," He says, before He begins to probe Peter.

JGW Have we anything to learn from the fact that it was Simon Peter who suggested the step, and then the way he is recorded as bringing the net full of great fishes? I am wondering whether we have anything to learn in relation to the Lord's affectionate dealings with him.

AJG I have not anything special in mind. It is characteristic of Peter that he is always in the lead, and that he is marked by a certain energy and so on. He is always in the lead, but in the end he is in the lead rightly. The Lord intended him to be in the lead.

SEE It would appear, according to the third verse, that Simon Peter had influenced John into a wrong course. In the seventh verse it would appear that John was able to influence Peter and bring him on to a right course.

AJG That is very interesting, especially in view of the way that they are seen together in the early chapters of the Acts. There was a link formed between them in affection which you get a sense of in these closing chapters of John's gospel. In the incident we referred to yesterday. John tells us he was instrumental in taking Peter into the palace of the high priest, and now there is this fact that you are calling attention to.

GCS And there it is Peter and John, and not Simon Peter.

AJG Quite so.

WET Is there anything to be learned from the fact that, when John speaks to him and tells him it is the Lord, Peter casts himself into the sea? I was wondering whether the words of John brought Peter to fear what he was in himself as Simon, and that man has to go completely.

AJG Quite so. We are told that he was naked which I suppose confirms what you are saying, that the word of John brought home to Peter what his real condition was.

HDT It shows, too, that he was putting his best into what he had in hand, but that it was yielding nothing.

AJG Yes.

GAL Peter says, "I go to fish." The Lord Jesus gave him a great haul of fish and provided a meal of fish and bread.

AJG Well, lambs and sheep have to be cared for and fed, but the food is fish and bread, just as it is in the feeding of the multitude.

GAL I was thinking not just of recovery, but what the Lord had recovered to, and what He had brought out in His own ministry. You remember in Nehemiah that the sheep gate comes first and the fish gate finds its place subsequently, as if it is a question of securing what the Lord was bringing out in His own ministry in this gospel in a peculiar way.

AJG That would be so. I think it is striking that here and in the feeding of the multitude it is fish and bread or bread and fish always; He is the bread of life, but fish refers to the illimitable reserves there are in the Spirit. You cannot number fish, no one knows the number of fish in the sea, and hence, in feeding the saints, while Christ is the main food you must also bring in that you draw on the Spirit so that there is an element of freshness in it.

HDT And the primary requirement in fish is freshness.

AJG Exactly.

HFN Would you say a word as to this distinctive service of Peter, and what is committed to him, because evidently in the epistle Peter tells us that his ministry had been effective. He says, "For ye were going astray as sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls," 1 Peter 2: 25. Would the Lord indicate to Peter that that peculiar ministry was committed to his hands?

AJG Yes, I think so, and first he is really probed to the bottom, so that he is freed of all self-confidence and self-assertiveness. The Lord comes to the root of the matter. First He said, "Lovest thou me more than these?" and then again the second time, "Lovest thou me?" and the third time, "Art thou attached to me?".

HFN Is it an important principle in recovery, that Peter was recovered first in his private interview, but have we also to be recovered in regard to the brethren? This is done in the presence of the brethren.

AJG That is very encouraging. The Lord would see that recovery is complete, and that the one whom He has recovered privately, is re-established in the confidence of his brethren.

JG Is not the restoration to be in a spirit of meekness according to Galatians 6? It says, "If even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness," verse 1. I thought that was what you had in mind, that the person is to be restored in a spirit of meekness.

AJG That applies to us, that if we attempt to restore any one we are to see that it is in a spirit of meekness, the reason for it being what follows, "considering thyself lest thou also be tempted," and to recognise that each of us is liable to do the thing that has overcome our brother.

DM Is there a connection between this chapter and verse 23 of the previous one, as to remission of sins coming before the retaining of sins?

AJG I think so. You mean that what characterises the dispensation is that grace is in the ascendancy.

HDT Is it not a fact that the disciples as possibly witnessing this would find some kind of echo in all their hearts? What Peter was learning he was learning not only for himself but for everyone.

AJG I am sure of that, but I think you will agree that one of our hardest things is to get rid of self in the things of God, and the Lord seems to be

probing Peter that he should get rid of himself.

HDT Quite so.

GCS Does the suggestion "Lovest thou me more than these?" have reference to the fish and his previous work as a fisherman?

AJG I do not think so. I thought it was an allusion to what Peter had said, that although all should deny Him, Peter would not. At the end of chapter 13 the Lord says, "Thou canst not follow me now," and Peter says, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee." What he has got to learn is the love of Christ for him, rather than to think much of his love for Christ.

JSE Are we not all tested in this matter by what is settled and what is active? Do we not find that a constant test to us, and yet the Lord makes what is settled primary, and only refers to what is active the third time.

AJG Yes. You are referring to the two different words the Lord uses, the first word referring to a settled disposition of love, and the other to active love that is called forth by the attractiveness of the one that is loved.

JSE I was struck by the way the Lord approaches Peter, because he always appears in the gospels as peculiarly active. One does not deny his affections in that way, but all the time there seemed to be something that the Lord was aiming for in it, so as to commit the sheep to his care; and one wonders whether we are not all tested in the same connection.

AJG I think so, and I think we can see that at the root of it there was a certain mixture of Peter in it all. Peter did love the Lord, but it was *Peter* who loved the Lord. I mean that was his own view of the matter, and that is what Peter has got to get rid of.

JSE And right at the end of his own history he says "In brotherly love, love" (2 Peter 1: 7), as though he had reached it.

AJG Quite so.

FVW Is the absence of the "Yea, Lord," to be noticed in the third time Peter replies?

AJG I think so. I was just thinking of a contrast. This is what we find in Paul. How quickly he came to an end of himself by appropriating the cross. He says, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me," and then he refers to "The Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me," so that Paul was not occupied with his love for Christ, but with Christ's love for him.

HFN And it is remarkable that that is spoken to Peter in Galatians 2.

AJG Well, if it *is* all spoken to Peter, it comes in in that connection.

JMcM Paul speaks of "the grace of our Lord surpassingly over-abounded with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus," 1 Timothy 1: 14. Do we see the grace of our Lord and surpassing love in this section?

AJG I think so.

WET When Andrew brings Simon to the Lord in the first chapter, it says, "He led him to Jesus. Jesus looking at him said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)." Is the end reached in this chapter? I was thinking of the name being changed.

AJG Yes. "Thou shalt be called Cephas." I suppose that is like Adam naming the creatures as they are brought to him, giving each its name, indicating some particular feature of the work of God. He was giving Peter his name, "Thou shalt be called Cephas."

FCW How far does the thought of manifestation go? I was thinking here of the Lord Himself when He takes the bread and the fishes. He does not give thanks for them as He does in chapter 6. I was wondering how far that would take you in relation to the Person of Christ.

AJG I suppose the particular impression that was to be left upon them was that of the Lord's recovering grace. That is the idea in manifestation, as far as I understand it.

Ques Why is Peter grieved when the Lord spoke to him three times?

AJG Why is Peter grieved because He speaks to Him the third time? Because the questions were forcing him to face things, and they were really raising the question as to whether he did love the Lord after all his persistence. The Lord knew, of course, that he was equal to the sifting. He knew he could stand the probing, but it was necessary for Peter's sake that He should get down to rock bottom.

AH Then does not the Lord use Peter's own words, "Art thou attached to me?" As has been pointed out, all the way through Peter uses that word "attached," and now the Lord even questions that word with him.

AJG Yes, but now Peter comes out with "*Thou knowest* that I am attached to thee." It is a different word implying objective knowledge. Previously it had been conscious knowledge, that is, he had been falling back on what the Lord would know of Himself as knowing all things, but now he says, 'You have objective knowledge that I am attached to Thee.' He comes to the point that there is something in him that the Lord can take account of objectively.

FVW Is it true that it was not because the Lord asked three times that he was grieved, but because of the way the Lord put it the third time?

AJG I think so. But now he really comes to the point that there is something there, something that is of God that can be taken account of.

Rem The emphasis is on "*Thou*."

AJG Yes, "*Thou* knowest that I am attached to thee."

Ques Does that suggest that the others would not have known it?

AJG Well - "*Thou* knowest," exactly. It is objective knowledge, and it implies that Peter was now arriving at it that it was not simply a question of casting himself on the divine knowledge that Jesus had, but there was something in Peter that was of God that the Lord could take account of. That is what we have to come to, that the only thing we can trust in ourselves is the work of God.

EBL Did you say that Peter had to come to where John was, that Jesus loved him. Did you say that?

AJG I do not know whether I said it, but I think it is true.

EBL And is it not as we come to the love of Christ that we come into the eternal thoughts of God.

AJG Yes, quite so.

HFN Would you say a word in relation to this peculiar discipline of Peter's, and then the touching way in which the Lord takes account of the moral halo around Peter's head? Does the Lord use affection and wisdom, for instance Paul having a thorn in the flesh and Peter having this peculiar character of discipline?

AJG I suppose so, but it seems to me to be a peculiar favour conferred on Peter that, now that he has come to this point that the only thing that can be relied upon is what is of God in himself, now that his own devotedness breaks down, he is brought to this, that he will be delivered from all self and activity of self. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst where thou desiredst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and bring thee where thou dost not desire. But he said this signifying by what death he should glorify God."

HDT Are you reminded of Paul's words to the Philippians, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross," Philippians 2: 8? There was to be something corresponding morally with that in Peter at the end.

AJG Exactly. It is a marvellous result of the work of God in one like Peter, and how, as coming under the influence of Christ, all that marked Peter naturally gradually disappears and is displaced, and then at the end he finishes his course in exact correspondence with Christ.

AH He speaks of this matter of his dying in a manner to glorify God, in his second epistle, as a manifestation.

AJG He does. It is worth referring to that passage in 2 Peter 1: 13. He says, "I account it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that the putting off my tabernacle is speedily to take place, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to me." He speaks of it in that simple way, the putting off of his tabernacle is speedily to take place. He is not telling those to whom he writes his epistle that he is going to be crucified, but he says it is the putting off of his tabernacle as the Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to him.

EuR Would it be right to say that these two last chapters run together? Is it in recovered persons who are the fruit of the Lord's activity that we find underlying what is normal in days like the present?

AJG I think so, and that service is to come into accord with Christ, because I believe the allusion to "When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself" is to service, but service with a good deal of self mixed up in it, and all that is to disappear.

WSS Is what is said in verse 20 corrective of that? I was thinking of "the disciple whom Jesus loved ... who also leaned at supper on his breast."

AJG And he was following. Peter sees "the disciple whom Jesus loved *following*." This is the last word to Peter, "Follow me," but John was already doing it. He did not need to be told to do it.

WSS I was wondering whether the following flows from our position at the Supper. I thought it seemed very significant that it is expressed in this way, "the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also leaned at supper on his breast." The one here in nearness to Christ is the one who followed, and I wondered whether it bore on our position at the Supper.

AJG I am sure that is right. We are continually renewed at the Supper in the appreciation of Christ and His love and His faithfulness. So that it was just after that occasion, when John was leaning on the breast of Jesus and asked who it should be who would betray Him, that Peter said, "Why cannot I follow thee now," but he has to learn to follow as affected by the love of Christ and not having himself before him.

GCS Is there a suggestion that we learn things in two ways; Peter in this way, and John on the bosom of Jesus.

AJG Quite so.

GCS It speaks of stretching out his hands. What does that refer to?

AJG It is an allusion to the fact that he would be crucified. One is not saying anything against what Mr. N. said, but I had not regarded this as primarily the thought of discipline, but rather the Lord indicating to Peter the end that he would reach, not so much the process by which he would reach it, but the end that he would reach. He would glorify God by being completely in correspondence with Christ.

HFN Would you mind saying that again, because it has always been taken as the Lord indicating to Peter the character of his discipline, and that he had to carry this to the end of his days. You do not think that is quite the thought?

AJG I think the thought is that the Lord was indicating to Peter that he would close his days not only by being martyred, but martyred by way of crucifixion - stretching forth his hands - and that is not the idea of discipline, because discipline is a kind of process, but this is the glorious end that he would reach.

HFN I think that is right, and I am glad to be corrected in regard to it. Then Peter has to be dealt with by the Lord in relation to the Lord's sovereign disposition of His own, has he not? Is it not a great challenge in this chapter?

AJG You are referring to the way that Peter says, "Lord, and what of this man?" The Lord says, "If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee?"

HFN What would you say as to that?

AJG We all have to recognise the absolute sovereignty of the Lord to take up whom He will and do what He pleases with those He takes up. The failure to recognise the sovereignty of the Lord in raising up to leadership whom He pleases, has been the occasion of many missing their way.

HFN Exactly.

EuR Does it suggest that if we get our eye on the Lord's service, we get it off the Lord Himself?

AJG Exactly.

AH You referred to 2 Samuel 12 in relation to the recovery of David. Does Psalm 51 prove the result of these exercises being really met by David with God?

AJG It does. It is in that Psalm that David says, "Thou wilt have truth in the inward parts." I venture to say that is continually pressing upon my mind. I think I can say that I believe it is something the Lord is insisting upon now, truth in the inward parts.

AH And leading up to the last verse of that Psalm where burnt offerings are presented to God, as if the service of God goes on in greater enrichment.

AJG As a result of it, yes, but I believe one great result of the increasing recognition of the Holy Spirit, in His abiding presence with us, is truth in the inward parts.

JGW Have you any thought in relation to verse 23 especially, in view of many inaccurate statements that find their way around? I wondered whether this is recorded for a purpose.

AJG It is constantly a matter of comment amongst us that so many inaccurate reports get about, and hence the apostle says, in verse 24, "This is the disciple who bears witness concerning these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his witness is true." He makes much of that in this gospel, that the witness he bears is true. I suppose it is just a reminder to us to be careful that what we do pass on in the way of information is true.

WSS Would verse 23 be an indication to us from the Lord that the disciple whom Jesus loved - that kind of a disciple would be with us to the end of the dispensation?

AJG Yes, and the importance of taking account of what the Lord does say, or of what others say. So that the Lord does not explain His meaning, but it says, "Jesus did not say to him, He does not die; but, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee?" What is said is just left, and we are to arrive at the meaning of it, but we are not to put another construction on it.

EWG What about "Follow *thou* me"?

AJG It is the last recorded word to Peter, and the emphasis is on the "*Thou*" - "Follow *thou* me," so that if each of us realises that he can find something of himself in Peter, or something of Peter in himself, that is a word to us, "Follow *thou* me."

HDT The path of following is really greater than the path of service, in one sense.

AJG Yes, it is.

ETS What is the thought of "one by one," as to the things that Jesus did, in the last verse? Why is it "one by one"?

AJG Because each of them is of such value that you would not like to speak of them in bulk. You remember the voice from heaven when Jesus was about thirty years old, "In thee I have found my delight." The Father says, "I have found," referring doubtless to what Jesus had been under His eye,

including many things He did even during the thirty years of private life. They were of such value that if they were written one by one the world itself could not contain the books that could be written. It brings out the greatness of the assembly as the vessel intended to display the fulness of Christ.

JMcK Is there a difference between the end of chapter 20 and this? In chapter 20 it says, "These are written," referring to the signs which are somewhat restricted in number but sufficient to bring out the glory of the Son of God, whereas chapter 21 is more the continual activity of grace and there is no limit to that, is there?

AJG No, exactly.

JMcK Is it striking what is said in verse 14, as though it left room for many other subsequent occasions?

AJG Yes, and I suppose the things that Jesus did would include not only things which had a testimonial or instructional purpose, but just what He was Himself coming out in the things He did. I suppose really they all come out in His body, the assembly; the saints as formed and moving under the influence of Christ will do the same things that Jesus did. I take it it will take the whole assembly to express the many things which Jesus did.

TJD Is it interesting, this recording of the things that Jesus did, in view of what was said yesterday, that John occupies us mainly with what He *said*, as opposed to His *doings*?

AJG Exactly. It is not books that God is working to secure. He is working to secure a vessel which is formed and held under the influence of Christ; so that all the things which Jesus did, which were an expression of Himself, will come out now in the assembly, and especially in the day to come.

MPS In chapter 14 the Spirit is to bring to their remembrance all the things that He had said to them. Is this, which we are speaking of now, flowing out from that?

AJG "All the things which I have said to you." Well, I do not know that one would specially connect the things that He did with the things that He said. I think the things that He said are for instruction, as far as I understand, but it seems to me that the things that He did are just the expression of Himself.

AB Would that be included in the thought of the assembly as His fulness, "The fulness of him who fills all in all," Ephesians 1: 23?

AJG That is what I thought.

AB They may not have been exactly recorded, but the result of the impressions is that they are expressed in the assembly.

AJG I think so. The assembly and those who compose it are held and formed under His influence. What Jesus is in Himself in a multitude of ways comes out in the things that He did, and it finds expression in His body, the assembly.

EuR Is it involved in what He said to Paul, "Why dost thou persecute me?"

AJG That is the "Me," indeed.

FVW Why does not John use a stronger word than "I suppose," for such a matter?

HFN Is it really a priestly supposition, in contrast to the supposition in chapter 20?

AJG What are you referring to in chapter 20?

HFN "She, supposing that it was the gardener." This is really John's priestly supposition as to the Person of Christ.

AJG Yes, I think that is helpful. That is to say, it is not exactly put in an authoritative way. This is what John arrives at as a result of his appreciation of the wonderful fulness there is in Christ.

THE SUBSTANTIAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY

1 Thessalonians 2: 5 - 12; Colossians 4: 7 - 14; Philemon 8 - 19

A. J. Gardiner What I desire to speak about is the substantial character of Christianity, that it is not merely a system of doctrine but it is something very concrete and substantial and is to be seen in the saints. That is why I have read these scriptures, because they will be found, I think, to indicate substantial features of the work of God appearing in one and another.

We have been speaking this morning and this afternoon of the way God is known as He has come out in wonderful revelation, having constituted what we speak of as the economy, God being known in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and the more we contemplate the economy, and the movements and services of the respective Persons of the Godhead, the more we are impressed with love, and that is what we might expect, for God is love, and the economy is simply the way that God has devised to bring His love in a tangible way to His creature, man, and to secure man in conditions of holy love before Him for ever, not merely in the blessing that a great benefactor might bestow on someone whom he regards as needy but in circumstances of the greatest conceivable nearness and in the liberty and affection which God has been pleased to devise for man; but in thus being made known, He having come into the light, He has in mind that we should be formed by the light in which He is thus revealed.

The great result of it, from one standpoint, will be seen in the holy city as it comes down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21); it will be marked by great substantiality, immense substance. The book of Revelation is a book of figures, it is not intended to be taken literally, but we are told in that book that the length of the city and the breadth of it and the height of it are each twelve thousand stadia, and if the Spirit of God gives us measurements, while He does not expect us to be literal in our thoughts, or unduly mathematical, yet He does give us these measurements in order that we may pay attention to them and so be impressed with immensity of substance, and anyone who takes the trouble to work out what the measurement of the city is according to these details given us will arrive at it that it is something over three thousand million cubic miles. I only mention that, not, as I say, to engage you with things in a literal way, but that the Spirit of God intends us to be impressed with immensity of substance formed in the saints as the result of the revelation of God in the way in which He has come out, so that there should be a vessel, as it comes down out of heaven from God, capable of exercising divine influence upon the whole universe. In all its influence, in all its

movements, in all its actings, it will be an impression of God that is left. Now that is not to be a mere abstract idea before our minds for the formation of it is going on now and each of us is a necessary part of it. The formation has to go on in our own souls, and it is to come out in that which is substantially formed in every one of us, so that, as our eyes are opened to see what God is effecting by means of the light in which He has come out in revelation, we can see in the saints what is of God and rejoice to see it as it comes out in its various features and activities.

In that way Christianity becomes extraordinarily interesting. It is not, as I say, merely a matter of doctrine, of teaching, though sound doctrine is essential, but it is a matter of what is substantial and real seen in the saints. God is unseen. Thank God, we shall see Christ. We have not yet seen Him, but we shall see Him, and He is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1: 15) but, save through Christ, we cannot see God. He remains the invisible God, but known to us blessedly and perfectly in the Mediator, "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2: 5), "whom, having not seen, ye love" (1 Peter 1: 8), but whom we shall see face to face; but still, as I say, the effect of the revelation of God may be seen and is to be seen concretely in the saints.

Well now, in reading this passage in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, I wanted to point out, first of all, how Paul himself is formed by the knowledge of God, and then in the other passages how others are brought out as all of them setting forth certain features of this formative work which the blessed God is carrying on. Paul says in writing to the Thessalonians, "we have not at any time been among you with flattering discourse, even as ye know, nor with a pretext for covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory from men," 1 Thessalonians 2: 5, 6. He begins with that which is negative and moral. He is going to lead on to that which is positive, how he was formed in love, but he begins first of all with that which is negative and moral, and he says that they had not been among them at any time with flattering discourse. That is an important matter, for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1 John 1: 5.

The more we have to do with God, the more we have things exactly as they are, and desire to have them exactly as they are, and we do not resort to flattery. Flattery is a most dangerous thing, and a most unholy thing in the things of God. Elihu said, "I know not how to flatter; my maker would soon take me away," Job 32: 22. There is a danger sometimes of flattery amongst us, and that would be corrected by the knowledge of God, by our keeping ourselves in the light in which God has come out, for He refuses all that is unreal. He does not go in for anything that is extravagant. He loves truth. He

is the God of truth. Paul was formed by the knowledge that he had of God, and says they had not used among the Thessalonians flattering discourse, nor a pretext for covetousness. How important all this is, especially for those who serve, that they should be watchful that the element of covetousness does not enter into their service. It can easily come in, but it is corrected by the knowledge of God. Flattery is one of the things found in the world on every hand, and covetousness is also found in the world on every hand, and the light in which God has come out in Christ is the great antidote to these things, and Paul called God to witness to the Thessalonians that in his own movements amongst them he had been entirely free from anything of the element of flattery and from anything of the element of covetousness, and further he says he had not been among them as seeking glory from men. We know that the Lord was here perfectly as not seeking glory. He says Himself, "I seek not mine own glory" (John 8: 50), and indeed He says most solemnly on one occasion, "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and seek not the glory which comes from God alone?" (John 5: 44). The element of seeking glory one of another acts as a hindrance to believing the truth.

Well now, I do not want to dwell unduly on these three features, but only to point out that the apostle brings them in first as moral elements that are all around us in the world and may tend to mark any one of us, but from which he was delivered by the light that he had of the blessed God. But now he says further, "we might have been a charge as Christ's apostles; but have been gentle in the midst of you, as a nurse would cherish her own children. Thus, yearning over you, ... " (1 Thessalonians 1: 7, 8). I believe in the verses that follow, beginning at this point, we have an allusion to the way the apostle was impressed, first, with the Holy Spirit, then with Christ, and then with the Father. He speaks of these tender feelings that marked him, as a nurse her own children - maternal feelings, yearning over them. I believe he has in his mind the impression he had of the wonderful feelings that have come into evidence in the Person of the Spirit of God here. We know that from the very outset the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, bringing into evidence at the very beginning the feelings that were in the heart of God. But now, what feeling there is with the Holy Spirit of God, as He has taken up His abode in us and is constantly watching to see how we are getting on. If He finds some of us tending to be neglectful of what God is saying, the Spirit of God will say, "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." That is, He will appeal. He is watching over us, you might say, if I may use the expression reverently, with maternal feelings, desiring that there should be formation going on in an unhindered way in the souls of God's people, and therefore He is yearning over us. He appeals, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of

God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption," Ephesians 4: 30. If the Spirit of God sees - I am alluding to the way He is presented in the epistle to the Hebrews - that the saints need establishing, that they are not fully established in grace. He will bring in the testimony of the Old Testament and remind us how it applies in a full way at the present time, saying "Their sins and their lawlessnesses I will never remember any more," Hebrews 10: 17. That is, the Spirit of God is watching and yearning. I think we may rightly say He is yearning. We want to get an impression of the feelings of the Holy Spirit, and the few allusions to Him in the epistle to the Hebrews are full of instruction in that way, as showing how He is watching over the state of the saints and would bring in what is needed at the moment. And how patient He has been for nearly 2000 years. One marvels at the way the Spirit of God has gone on patiently and undeterred all these years. He is now beginning to get the honour that is due to Him, beginning to get an increasing place with us, and the more place He gets with us the more it will develop holy sensitiveness and watchfulness on our part and at the same time holy liberty with the blessed God; but all this is the result of the Spirit's own patient work towards us, and I believe we may rightly say He is yearning over the saints.

Paul had taken on the character of a nursing mother, a remarkable thing, that the same kind of feelings and watchful care that had come into expression in the Spirit of God were now finding their counterpart in Paul himself in the way he laboured among the Thessalonian saints, but then he was also affected by what he saw in Christ, and so he goes on to say, "Thus, yearning over you, we had found our delight in having imparted to you not only the glad tidings of God, but our own lives also, ... " 1 Thessalonians 1: 8. That is, he had come under the impress of the love of Christ. "He has laid down his life for us" (1 John 3: 16), as it says. "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." This was working out in the apostle. It was no longer a matter simply of what was stated in the scripture; it was not only a matter now even of what had come to light in Christ and the Spirit, but it was there formed substantially in Paul. The thing was taking form in a substantial way in Paul. He was taking character from the Spirit; he was taking character from Christ. The Lord has laid down His life for us; and Paul, keeping himself in the light of this wonderful revelation of divine love in the Person of the Son, was prepared to lay down his life for the Thessalonian saints. And then he goes on to say, "ye remember, brethren, our labour and toil; working night and day, not to be chargeable to any one of you, we have preached to you the glad tidings of God," 1 Thessalonians 1: 9. That is, the laying down of his life for the brethren did not take form in one act and then it was done; it took form in a

persevering continuance, in self-sacrificing love night and day. Well, beloved brethren, you may say that is going to involve a great deal of cost and sacrifice. That may well be, but there is no great moral value in anything that does not cost something and does not involve sacrifice. God loves sacrifice. He has come out supremely in the way of sacrifice Himself; if anyone had drawn near to the tabernacle system, if the people of God had been filling it out according to divine requirements, one thing would have impressed them more than anything else, and that was that it was a system of continual sacrifice. The odour of sacrifice was ascending to God morning and evening and all through the day, as one after another brought their offerings. There was an odour of sacrifice going up to God all the time.

Well, dear brethren, that is what Christianity is in its reality. Thank God, we shall not always be marked by conditions calling for sacrifice, or by suffering or anything of that kind, but love in its reality has been told out in such conditions, and it is in such conditions, calling for sacrifice, that the work of formation in us goes on. Then Paul goes on to say, "Ye are witnesses, and God, how piously and righteously and blamelessly we have conducted our selves with you that believe; as ye know how, as a father his own children, we used to exhort each one of you, and comfort and testify, that ye should walk worthy of God, who calls you to his own kingdom and glory," 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12. He brings in the thought now of a father. He has been a nursing mother, and he was prepared to lay down his life for them, and now he brings in the thought of exercising the moral influence of a father, and I think we may say that he had in mind the way God has spoken as Father and the way a father deals with his children, how it says in Ephesians 5, "Be ye... imitators of God, as beloved children." That is, the consciousness of being beloved children is being brought in by the Spirit of God as an incentive to take character from our Father, and so he says, "Be ye ... imitators of God, as beloved children." We know what the Father is in His tender interest in His children, disciplining them if need be, but not in a harsh way, but, as it says in Hebrews 12, that we might be partakers of His holiness. That is, it is a question of love desiring to secure conditions wholly suited to itself, that there may not be a shade of distance between us and the Father.

I think we can see that in that which actuated the apostle in his movements at Thessalonica there is a kind of allusion to the fact that he was impressed with the way God has come out, the Spirit and the Son and the Father, each in turn having His own influence upon the apostle and affecting his outlook towards the saints. There was that which was in the apostle Paul, formed in him, that corresponded with God.

Well now, in Colossians 4, Paul seems to take pleasure in bringing under our notice these different brethren and the features that marked them, and so he says, "Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-bondman in the Lord ..." He is, first of all, a beloved brother. I suppose we could hardly have a more attractive designation of anyone than that he was a beloved brother; that is, one who was marked by the love proper to the family and beloved because of what he was. I do not think Paul is saying this in any careless way. If he says "a beloved brother" he means that Tychicus was beloved and rightly so, beloved because of what he was. So you will remember it says of David that "all Israel and Judah loved David," 1 Samuel 18: 16. Why did they love him? Because "he went out and came in before them." That is to say, all his movements were in the open. They knew what he had done for them, how he had taken his life in his hands and gone to meet the giant on their behalf - that would attract their hearts to him - but what confirmed him in the place he had in their affections was that he went out and came in before them. All his movements were in the open. He was moving simply and unaffectedly before his brethren, so that they might see there was nothing concealed or anything of that sort in his movements. You might say he was a beloved brother. But then Tychicus is also a faithful minister. That does not mean a minister in any official sense; it means one who acts or waits in service, one who is just available to do anything that needs doing - a most important thing. It is not a question of wanting to be anything outstanding, or anything of that sort; it is a question of just fitting into the structure that God is forming in the saints. He would be one who was just at hand, ready to do anything that wanted to be done, and doing it faithfully. And then he was a "fellow-bondman in the Lord," thoroughly devoted to the Lord's interests - a bondman.

I think we can see how these things are the results of our learning God in Christ. We remember how the Lord says, "I am among you as he that serveth," Luke 22: 27. He does not specify any particular kind of service. He was among them in the character of the One who serves, and we were having before us this morning how He laid aside His garments and took a linen towel and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the linen towel wherewith He was girded; John 13. He was setting them an example of serving love. What He did to them He did in love, in order that it might become formative, and that love of this character might be formed in the brethren, and then not only so, but He showed that He was wholly devoted to God's will. There is nothing so calculated to make us devoted as the contemplation of Christ in His devotedness to God's will, and Tychicus had taken on this three-fold character - a beloved brother, a faithful minister and a

fellow-bondman in the Lord, and Paul says he "will make known to you all that concerns me," Colossians 4: 7. Tychicus is a most interesting character, for we gather from this epistle and from the epistle to the Ephesians that he would seem to be a link between the apostle, on the one hand, and the Colossian or Ephesians saints on the other. He could make known to them all that concerned Paul, and then also, "that he might know your state" (verse 8); he would be able to bring word to Paul as to how the Colossians were getting on, as to what their real state was, and that being among them he would encourage their hearts.

All these things are very simple, but they represent the substantial work of God in one and another, not all formed exactly after the same pattern. It is, of course, all formed after God, as known in Christ, but then there are differences, differences in glory, star differing from star in glory; 1 Corinthians 15: 41. All are glorious, all are heavenly, yet star differing from star in glory. That is the system we are connected with, and every brother and every sister is to some extent at any rate a star, and it is a question of understanding that God is working in us what is essentially glorious, because it is a great system of glory that He is forming by the light in which He has come out in Christ.

And then Paul brings in Onesimus. When we come to the epistle to Philemon we learn what Onesimus' history had been, but here the apostle says nothing about it. I suppose it is possible that the epistle to the Colossians and the epistle to Philemon were carried by Onesimus at the same time, but here Paul is commending Onesimus to the Colossians, "the faithful and beloved brother who is one of you," Colossians 4: 9. It is the skilful and delicate way in which love moves, seen in the apostle Paul. It is beautiful to see the way love works, and how he commends this Onesimus, of whose history we hear in the epistle to Philemon, to the Colossian saints and says he is a "faithful and beloved brother." He had not had long, as far as we may judge, to develop in these features, but he had developed in them, he had become beloved by the apostle Paul, and Paul actually links him with Tychicus, saying, "They shall make known to you everything here," verse 9. And then he mentions others - Aristarchus, a fellow-captive, that is one who is suffering for the testimony with Paul. That has its value, the sympathy that enters into it, dear brethren, and the faithfulness too. We read of the Lord that He looked for comforters and found none. There is such a thing as finding sympathy in the exercises of the testimony, and Paul valued Aristarchus as one who was a fellow-captive. These are different features of the work of God. You can see the glory shining out as you see these different ones brought before you. We might wonder why the apostle mentions so many brethren in some of his epistles, but it is really like bringing stars in their respective glories, one by one, before our eyes, so

that we may get an impression of the system of glory to which we belong. If Paul speaks of these different brethren he is not like some of our letters of commendation. He is not extravagant in his statements. He is not attaching to brethren things that do not properly belong to them. He is sober in what he says. He makes a difference between different ones. It is a great thing to be true. By all means be marked by love, and by all means look at the work of God. At the same time, bear with me for referring to it in passing, as it comes to one's mind, we want to make sure that the persons who receive the letters will get by the letters a right estimate of the person who is being commended, and not a wrong one. We want to take account of what we have written and see whether that will convey to the persons to whom the letter is written, a right appreciation, and when I say a right appreciation I mean a true and sober appreciation of the work of God in the brother or sister whom we are commending. And so, as it comes to one's mind in speaking in this way, we notice at the end of the passage read - that Paul mentions Demas, but says nothing more about him. We should note, what is said in certain cases and what is not said in certain other cases; Demas had asked to be included in these salutations, and Paul felt what Demas was. It was not long after this that Paul had to say Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world (2 Timothy 4: 10), and no doubt Paul, with spiritual discernment, knew that the root was already there in Demas, and so he says "and Demas" and leaves it there. This is an example to us of truth and sobriety in the things of God, but then he mentions Mark, "if he come to you, receive him" (verse 10) a word of encouragement, a recovered man, "and Jesus called Justus, who are of the circumcision," verse 11. "These are the only fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who have been a consolation to me." That is how Paul can speak of them; they have been "fellow-workers for the kingdom of God." That is to say, I have no doubt these were themselves characterised by subjection to the Holy Spirit, for that is the form the kingdom of God takes. It is the moral sway of God over the soul, and it is one of the great essentials if we are to be rightly in the assembly, that we should know something of the kingdom of God. There must be subjection to the Holy Spirit if we are to enter properly into our place in the assembly, and so the Lord in the first chapter of Acts, while assembling with the disciples, in order to get them accustomed to the idea of the assembly, spoke to them of the kingdom of God. That is a most important essential. You remember that Paul mentions that in Acts 20, how he first preached repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and then he presented the gospel of the grace of God, bringing in, you might say, the teaching of Galatians in order that they might be thoroughly established in the sense that nothing less than sonship is in the mind of God for us, and then he goes on to say he had been among them preaching the

kingdom of God. That brings in the subjective side of things, real formation by the Holy Spirit, without that we cannot enter rightly into the truth of the assembly. And so they were fellow-workers for the kingdom of God, and they had been a consolation to Paul. And now he brings in Epaphras, "who is one of you, the bondman of Christ Jesus, salutes you." This is a local brother "always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," Colossians 4: 12. What a valuable brother such would be in any locality, or a sister equally. It so happens that the passages I have read do not include any sisters; other passages do, and when it comes to a local position being supported by earnestly combating in prayer for the saints, that can easily be filled out by a sister as well as by a brother. You can see what a value such a person in any company would have, "always combating earnestly for you in prayers." Satan would bring in all kinds of obstacles to hinder anyone who is minded to continue praying for the saints, but Epaphras would not allow himself to be overcome by obstacles. He would overcome, combating earnestly in prayer.

Sometimes it may be Satan is allowed to bring in hindrances to our spirits when we are praying, and the great thing is not to give way, to continue in prayer until the hindrance is removed. The hindrance *will* be removed. Of course, if there is a moral reason for the hindrance, the only way to remove it is to judge it, but sometimes the enemy may bring in pressure upon the mind or obstruction upon the spirit in order to hinder prayer, and the great thing is not to surrender to him but to go on praying, and we will find that power comes in and we get released. It is a question of combating earnestly in prayer, and no doubt Epaphras, as having the whole will of God before him, being earnest as to it, would not only have the mind of God itself before him, but would also be marked by perception as to the different movements of the enemy, the different influences that were being brought to bear upon the saints, that would hinder them from entering into those things. And so he says, "Epaphras ... the bondman of Christ Jesus, salutes you, always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," and then he goes on to say "that he labours much for you, and them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis," verse 13. That is, he is a brother who was enlarged; he could take in two neighbouring assemblies as well. What a commendation! Upon Paul there came daily the burden of all the assemblies. Epaphras was perhaps not equal to that, but he was at any rate equal to the burden of three assemblies. Well now, that is a brother who has great value. If he were not formed after Christ he would not sacrifice himself in this way. The apostle has to say to the Philippians, "all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ"

(Philippians 2: 21), but you may rest assured that Epaphras went to considerable sacrifice of personal comfort, and all that kind of thing, in order to make time to take on in an earnest and intelligent way this prayer for the Colossians and for those in Hierapolis and for those in Laodicea; and Paul loves to bring it forward in order that we might have this distinctive glory before our eyes and hearts. Then he speaks of "Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you," verse 14. He does not tell us anything more about him, but how beloved he was! He was one who had a great appreciation of Christ, or he could never have written the gospel of Luke. He had a great appreciation of the testimony, or he could never have written the Acts of the Apostles. A brother well worthy to be beloved, "the beloved physician," one who remained true to Paul right through to the end, and, I expect he served him personally as well, and Paul loves to bring him forward.

I am mentioning these things if only one could convey some impression of the substantiality and greatness of Christianity as seen in the saints, and that we might be concerned that the work of God should go on in each one of us unhindered, and that we might learn to appreciate one another in this light, appreciating the distinctive glories of the various stars that belong to the wonderful system to which we belong.

Now in closing, I want to say a word as to Philemon. Paul is writing to Philemon, and, as we know, he is writing about Onesimus, who had been Philemon's slave and had apparently, so far as we can gather, run away and been brought into touch with Paul at Rome and had been converted. It is wonderful, the ways of God. It was not only going to work out for Onesimus' blessing and in his being formed as a faithful and beloved brother; it was going to work out in blessing to Philemon too; and so God has this structure in mind in all that He is doing. His ways are wonderful; they all contribute to the great end to which He is working, the formation of this vessel of glory in which He Himself is to be expressed. And so Paul writes to Philemon, marked by remarkable Christian sensibilities, he says, "having much boldness in Christ to enjoin thee what is fitting, for love's sake I rather exhort" (Philemon 8). That is, he wants to call forth love in Philemon, and so he does not enjoin but he exhorts for love's sake. He is bringing in the appeal of love in order to bring out love. Sometimes we hear people say that there is not much love in a local company, but if that is felt to be the case, why not bring it in? There is nothing like love to call forth love. Bring in a little love and you will soon find that love will be called forth. So Paul says that "for love's sake," he wants to call forth love in Philemon; so he brings in love, "for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also prisoner of Jesus Christ." And now he says he would have retained him, but, he says, "I have wished to do

nothing without thy mind, that thy good might not be as of necessity but of willingness," verse 14. These things are most touching, dear brethren. This is not doctrine, this is the practical working out of the divine nature in the saints, seen in the smallest detail - just a runaway slave and a servant of the Lord in prison, and a brother to whom he is writing; and these things are being used by God to bring out and develop the divine nature in one and another. It is a great thing to have our eyes open to what God is doing. He is doing these things in order to bring the work of God more and more into relief. So he says, "Perhaps for this reason he has been separated from thee for a time, that thou mightest possess him fully for ever; not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother, specially to me, and how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?" (verse 15, 16). And now he is considering that possibly there may be a little hard feeling in the heart of Philemon. I have no doubt Onesimus had wronged him; Philemon might think he had good cause for some measure of hard feeling against Onesimus, and Paul is determined that any such thought should be removed. He is determined that only what is of God should remain. It is to be formed in Philemon by these very circumstances, and so he says, "if he have wronged thee anything or owe anything to thee, put this to my account. *I* Paul have written it with mine own hand; *I* will repay it; that I say not to thee that thou owest even thine own self also to me," verse 18, 19. You can see how he is writing in the spirit of Christ. If we have something against a brother or a sister, it is as though the Lord would say, You debit me with that. On which side will the account still remain? Paul is moving in the spirit of Christ, in order that there should be completely removed from Philemon's mind or heart the slightest suspicion of any hard feeling against this brother, who had been converted but who is now to go back to Philemon as a matter of righteousness. And Philemon, on the other hand, was to receive him as a beloved brother. And so Paul says, "put this to my account. *I* Paul have written it with mine own hand; *I* will repay it: that I say not to thee that thou owest even thine own self also to me." Paul was in a position to say that, but really it is the Spirit of Christ working out in Paul, and no doubt proving effective.

There is no doubt whatever that the result of this would be that Philemon would receive Onesimus as Paul says as a brother beloved, and the result of these ordinary and trivial circumstances, such as the world would count as of no importance at all, was that the work of God was going on. It was even developing in Paul, it was developed, no doubt, in Onesimus. Paul would insist on Onesimus going back to his master as a matter of practical righteousness. Christianity does not do away with the fulfilling of righteous obligations, but rather gives power in the Spirit to fulfil every righteous obligation; but then, on

the other hand, love was to come out in Philemon; and all these things were used by God for formation. Every brother and every sister is potentially in this system a star, "star differing from star in glory," and the whole thing in its completeness is shortly to come down "out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God," Revelation 21: 10.

May the Lord help us in appreciating the substantiality of Christianity, to see that we ourselves are formed by the light in which God is revealed, and that we are filling out our part in it, to the glory of the blessed God.

PRACTICAL DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD

Psalm 78: 40 - 54; 1 John 2: 14 - 17; 1 John 4: 4 - 6; 1 John 5: 19 - 21

J. McKay We cannot estimate the value of the impressions that have been left in the hearts of the saints in our considerations these two days, for they are many and varied and wealthy. They are impressions that belong to another world; they belong to what is eternal; they belong to the Father's world. We must have felt - every loyal heart must feel - the need to come practically into the exercises that make for the consolidation of these expressions in our hearts. In that connection the world in which we are stands so directly opposed and hostile to the divine realm, for it is Satan's great system by which he holds men, and, alas, holds many believers; and what I would like to speak about this evening is practical deliverance from it, for we must have noticed, as the Scriptures have come before us, that all we have been speaking about in connection with this economy of love lies entirely outside the world as such, and that our access into it, and the opening up of the Father's realm, is on the basis of this world being overcome; the Lord Jesus saying, "Be of good comfort; I have overcome the world." This was His last word before, in heart and mind and affection, He turned to the Father. Indeed, there are many passages that speak of this holy movement out of the world to the Father, and I am sure that our hearts have been allured and attracted - perhaps as never before - by the glory of what is unseen and yet so blessedly real, in the knowledge of divine Persons.

And yet this matter of our being in the world remains, as the Lord Jesus said in speaking to the Father: "I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee." We can but feel how the saints in the world are the subject of the most tender affection, and not only of tender affection but of infinite power to keep them there, just as long as it is desired, for the Lord Jesus is the One who is in entire control. As we were being so happily reminded, everything goes through according to the divine plan, and yet He says, "I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil."

There are many allusions to the way we are to be kept. We think of the Father keeping. What that means! Consider the Father - the greatness of that Person in His tender consideration - and yet in His sovereign power keeping the saints, *keeping* them. Indeed it is a title of God, "unto him that is able to keep," and we would derive comfort and peace and holy joy from the knowledge that the Father is keeping us here. Then we think too of the Lord Jesus, the apostle in opening up the word to the Galatians saying, "our Lord

Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world." Then we are reminded of the word as to the Holy Spirit: "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." So that, beloved brethren, there is every occasion for peace and joy, and indeed thanksgiving. It should all enhance the worship of divine Persons to us, as we think of Their ability to keep the saints in the world without loss or harm.

But then, in the wisdom of God, there is the practical working out of this matter, that not only are we said to be kept and delivered, and not only have we this wonderful indwelling of the Holy Ghost, but we are to overcome the world and thereby acquire a constitution. We are left here not only for testimony but with a view to our acquiring a constitution, and so our very being in the world is to serve this great end, the Lord Jesus saying, "I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world." What a wonderful consideration that in that sense the saints are to continue what was here seen in Jesus in that blessed way. One would trust that the consideration of such a momentous matter should profoundly affect our hearts.

And now as to our being here in the world, this world in which we are, though it be the very scene of divine operations, remains in its dreadful hostility to all that is of God. Indeed it is the great obstructor, "the prince of this world," the great system which in its entirety and totality stands over against all that divine Persons have brought in. I am impressed, beloved brethren, by the fact that the whole world is spoken of in its entirety as being opposed and standing over against what is of the Father.

So the word in John's epistle comes with peculiar appeal, surely, to all our hearts. "I have written to you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you Love not the world, nor the things in the world." Let us understand, beloved brethren, that there is no point of conciliation between the world and the divine system. What belongs to the Father is in complete separation from all that there is in the world. And so the word of the apostle John. What a man he was in the consciousness of divine affections! He knew the Persons of whom he spoke. He knew the Father, and he knew the Son of God, and he knew the Comforter. What holy conscious knowledge was there in the one who now makes this appeal and gives this word of exhortation to the young men; and one has a concern, dear brethren, that the generation that is growing up - and God deals in generations - should have constitution and experience and maturity, and John with deep feeling says, "Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The Spirit of God would help us to get a right impression of the world. I am not speaking now, for a moment, as to our experience, but rather viewing it abstractly as a system in which all the lusts of the flesh find release and indulgence. He would, so to speak, describe it in spiritual terms, that we might be free from it, and concerned to be free from it, for, as he tells us, there is no reason for not being free from it, for "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Then, as if to conclude the whole matter for us, he would say, "We know ... the whole world lies in the wicked one." If we have any doubts, if we have had any points of compromise, let us be challenged, dear brethren, by the words of the Spirit of God from the beloved apostle, that "the whole world lies in the wicked one," and outside of it, we may say, totally and entirely outside of it, subsists this system of living affections - the Father, and the Son, and the Comforter, and the saints. All these blessed and eternal relationships shall never deteriorate, shall never cease; they are all entirely outside of this world; this world standing, as it were, as the great obstructor to the divine realm, and hence the Lord Jesus saying, "I have overcome the world."

How many references there are in John's writings to this world! It would seem that the greater the truth brought out, the more this world in its composition, and moral texture, is thrown into relief, and the more we are to beware of having part in it - save only in testimony. Thank God for the opportunity of remaining in it for testimony. We have been touched by the exalted nature of the testimony in this world. How great and how blessed to be here - here as bearing witness to the truth, the truth set out, not in terms but in one blessed Person, the true light coming into the world, this life. And so we would covet to be in it, shall we say, as we should be, and yet free from it in a practical way.

I have read from this most remarkable Psalm, which is a review by a spiritual person, by a man of God - a review of the history of things beginning, we might say, with the question of being delivered from this present evil world. So right at the beginning of this Psalm we have the question of generations to come being fully acquainted with the truth, and it would imply that we are to learn the truth in a living way; that not only should we have ministry, and what is written, but that we should learn the truth as it is in persons. Paul could speak of Timothy reminding the saints of his ways as they are in Christ.

So the Psalm opens up with the provision made for the continuance of the truth in the generations that are to come. It must be a concern that the generations to come should have the truth as borne witness to in persons and as learned livingly; so that, right at the outset, the blessed God was careful to

have the truth in Israel in such a way that it could be taken account of. We were reminded on the past night of what was substantial, and it would seem that right at the outset God ordained that the elders in Israel should come into the matter of this great truth of deliverance. In Exodus 3, Moses is told to take with him the elders of Israel to Pharaoh, as though He would bring into relief the question and importance of the truth being set out in experienced persons amongst us, that there should be scope and opportunity for all to learn directly from persons, that they might tell it to their children, and so on, to the generations to come. Think of God having generations who have learned the truth, beloved brethren, and in whom, so to speak, there are no moral defects!

I feel the importance of the younger brethren learning the truth, not only learning about it, but as coming into it in a very vital kind of way, and hence the obligation on the elders that it should be there set out. The reference to the elders is not to give them precedence exactly but rather to put upon them the obligation of the diffusion of the truth in Israel. We read in this first reference to them that they were to be with Moses at his interviews with Pharaoh, so that they should understand what was in hand as to the great thoughts of God in the deliverance of His people. Then too, as speaking of the passover, special word was given to the elders that what was said in the initial commandment to Israel might be augmented and amplified, so that it should have weight and so that it should be there by example in what was done. The word as to seizing the lamb, and the blood in the basins implying what could be handled, and the use of hyssop, would all indicate what is to be seen and taken account of by way of example in the elders. Later, in Exodus 17, the word speaks of the elders being with Moses at the smiting of the rock. I am sure, beloved brethren, the Spirit of God has in mind that these great truths should be held in gravity and moral power amongst us, so that the smiting of the rock was not to be a mere doctrine. It was not to be a matter simply understood as making way for the gift of the Spirit, but the very importance of it, the solemnity of it, all that it would mean in the sufferings of Christ, was to be present with weight, finding residence, we might say, in the elders of Israel, all with a view to what was formative in the generation that was springing up.

We might just for a moment refer also to them as being taken up into the mountain, so that they should have impressions of what was heavenly. I believe there is a sense in which these divine truths are only conveyed by spiritual means, that no one from mere reading could exactly get an impression of the heavenlies. It says of the elders that "they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the form of heaven for clearness," Exodus 24: 10. That was a

matter that was to be the property, the inheritance, of Israel, as an impression of the God who had delivered them. So that, beloved brethren, we are to be concerned that things should be substantial amongst us and that truth should be known in persons and held at its own proper level in those who have to do with God. So that our scripture in the Psalm, a marvellous review by Asaph, brings into poetic distinctiveness all that was true, implying the significance of the truth. What is poetic is not merely the transcription of what is true and divine. Hymns are not merely the putting into rhyme of what is in Scripture; they are a theme. They show that the truth has been arrived at in the soul, and that distinct, definite impressions are made known to the soul as hymns are composed; and so we come to this section which implies that there was a lack of understanding of what was involved in being delivered from the world. It seems to bring us right back to what is fundamental in the very early stages, we might say, of our experience. Previously there had been in the Psalm certain touches as to the deliverance. We may say that in the first part there is what would refer to the Exodus setting, what God had done "He clave the sea, and caused them to pass through; and made the waters to stand as a heap; And he led them with a cloud in the daytime, and all the night with the light of fire. He clave rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the depths, abundantly." Exodus would give us, so to speak, the way God not only delivers from the great world system but the marvellous grace in which the believer is set up as independent of it; so that the manna is given profusely and the water is given abundantly, as out of great depths, as if God is countering in His grace every thought of Egypt. He would bring them into the sphere of His own gracious provision for them, and give them an impression of how much greater were the things they had come to. The manna from heaven rained down upon them, it says. How profuse God is! How abundant His supplies in the wilderness, to strengthen the heart in its having left this great world system. But then, in the working out of it and in the waywardness of the flesh, there are further experiences, and we might say that we get a Numbers setting in the verses further on, where it says, "And he rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowl as the sand of the seas. And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations: And they did eat, and were well filled; for that they lusted after, he brought to them. They were not alienated from their lust," Psalm 78: 27 - 30. A very sorrowful matter, beloved brethren, and one that is to be considered and gone into, that though positionally delivered they were not alienated from what really belonged to the world system. It found a counterpart in their hearts, and hence the discipline of God that this matter of deliverance should be complete and vital. So the section we read would bring us back, we might say, to the day when God began to operate in Egypt, and perhaps we need to give

consideration to this, beloved brethren, that before God would take His people out of the world He would expose the world in every detail and He would give His people to be of one in their judgment of it with Him. It is said that "they turned again ... they remembered not his hand, the day when he delivered them from the oppressor. How he set his signs in Egypt, and his miracles in the field of Zoan." God has a glory all His own, beloved brethren, and we are to learn God in the way He delivers His people, the way He has delivered them, as it says, "How he set his signs in Egypt." They are there, so to speak, permanently, that so long as this world system lasts, there stands in it all that is of God in this way, signs that would indicate thorough and complete exposure of the world system, so that the saints should not be held by it. I am sure that if we are to understand the signs in John's gospel we must first of all understand the signs in the field of Zoan. That would mean that every feature of the world is examined, so to speak, and judged, and left.

God does not write the world off, so to speak, at one stroke. He allows it - indeed He ordains - that it should be exposed and that the saints should judge it, for having judged it, leaving the world becomes a simple matter. I would encourage the brethren to read the signs. It may mean that we should come into closer contact and into the presence of what challenges the rights of God here in the world, and that we should not hesitate to go forward and to be in the truth initially.

God does not exactly begin His people with the paschal lamb. He begins here, right in the presence - in the stronghold, we may say - of the great world system, and He begins there first to expose and to judge the very source of it, the streams of it, and, having passed judgment upon the stream, to show what emerges from it in all that is unholy and all that is unclean. And by these means God would prepare His people for the passover. He would prepare them for it, hearts prepared and ready to leave, so that the word which speaks about eating the passover in haste, with loins girded, with staff in hand and shoes on their feet, would all imply a prepared people, ready to leave. The question would therefore arise, beloved brethren, as to whether we are ready to leave and whether we have this moral history on our side, that would strengthen us and find us in these conditions of preparation.

And so we have to learn God. God has His own way of exposing things and of weakening things. He does not use the military might of nations in Egypt. It says, "he gave their increase unto the caterpillar." That is like God, to use the things "that are not to bring to nought the things that are." How things are brought down in the power of God by means that leave no glory, so to speak, to men! "Their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust."

Small things, we may say, but the great world system impoverished, reduced, brought down, so to speak, until it is just a matter of leaving it.

It goes on to say that "he smote all the first-born in Egypt, the first-fruits of their vigour in the tents of Ham." How encouraging it is, beloved brethren, to find a man who can clothe the operations of God with thoughts like this! "And he made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; And he led them safely, so that they were without fear; and the sea covered their enemies." What a challenge to us, beloved brethren, as to whether we are in the practical gain of deliverance! We may have the knowledge of it judicially. Thank God if we have light in our souls as to being delivered judicially, that God has in Christ dealt with everything, but then as to our souls, are we in deliverance, for it goes on to say, "And he brought them to his holy border, this mountain, which his right hand purchased." It would seem that this moral course, this pathway, is a divine necessity, that He should bring them "to his holy border" - *His* holy border, not exactly to theirs but to *His* holy border, "this mountain, which his right hand purchased."

And so, beloved brethren, that brings us to the point that we have been speaking of, where divine Persons are able to effect all that They have undertaken with the saints, but there is a moral way, a moral process, an education and an experience essential to us on this line of practical deliverance if the great things of the economy are to be entered on and enjoyed. So the word comes afresh, "love not the world." What a word it is to us, beloved brethren! Let us reflect upon the glory that divine Persons have been presenting to us these two days, impressions that perhaps we have never had before. How great a favour to be in the presence of the truth as it relates to divine Persons Themselves, with the ability of the Spirit to leave something permanently upon the heart. We have come, we may say, "to his holy border, this mountain," the great system of living affections, and we are becoming increasingly acquainted with this great system of love, the love of the Father as over against the love of the world. "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Might we not earnestly consider, once, and for all, settling our accounts with the world and every feature of it, so as to be, we may say, ready to embrace in its entirety, in its infinite blessedness, all that lies in the knowledge of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

John would enlarge on this. Whilst he presents the highest things to us, yet he is the most practical and the most simple. The way he speaks of the world and the way he speaks of divine Persons would mean that he is practically in the truth, and he would have the word come into our hearts in all its practical

force and bearing, so that we should be freed - free in our spirits, free in our affections, free in our minds, for further apprehensions as to the glory of divine Persons Themselves.

May we be found ready, beloved brethren, for further holy impressions of this great system of love, for His name's sake.

GROWING UP TO CHRIST IN ALL THINGS

Genesis 49:10; Ephesians 4:15,16

H. D. Thomas The impressions, dear brethren, we shall take away from these gatherings will be many and varied but they will have one thing in common, for we have all been freshly impressed, not only with the greatness of what God has planned for His pleasure and the love that gave rise to it, but also with the preciousness of the One in whom these things have reached us. His personal place in the divine plan, and the closest possible link we are to have with Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I suppose as reviewing the meetings it would be legitimate to recall the chord that was struck in our hearts, "Behold the man!" "Behold your king!" and I have in mind, dear brethren, to speak of Jesus personally, as the One who, according to divine design, is to fill a most remarkable place in the divine realm, not only in relation to the kingdom, but in relation to eternity. Not only does He fill that place because He is the only One who could fill it, but because it is part of the divine plan that God has designed to bring everything under the domination of one Man, for I apprehend that the kingdom is the settlement of everything in time to make way for the family conditions which will exist in eternity. With this in view, dear brethren, it is the greatest possible advantage to us to be made aware of what God has before Him to do. He knows the end from the beginning. We often have to wait for the unfolding of things, and it is well that we should learn how to wait, and there is that, of course, which is given sovereignly, for instance, to Paul - his knowledge of the mystery, it was not Peter's knowledge, it was not anybody else's, it was *his* knowledge. This shows that God has a way of conveying His mind to someone fitted to minister it amongst the saints. On the other hand chapter 1 of Ephesians does not speak of Paul's knowledge of the mystery, but speaks of what has been made known to us. Who are the "us"? It is, may I say, dear brethren, ordinary Christian ground. That many saints do not apprehend it does not alter the fact that it is the divine mind for every one of the redeemed. So that Paul is speaking in chapter 1 of what God had before Him "according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences," verse 6, 7. I may add, dear brethren, not according to our estimation of the need but, "according to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to abound towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will." That is, dear brethren, He is going "to head up all things in the Christ," in Him, in one blessed Man. I know very well the Spirit of God is involved too, and it is clear that the assembly has a

very remarkable place in the plan, but, dear brethren, I believe it is well sometimes to get a clear view of Christ, for everything in the divine realm focuses for us in the manhood of Jesus. We know the Father in Him, I believe we become more acquainted with the Spirit as He serves us in glorifying Him, and to think, dear brethren, that divine love has given us a place with Him and in Him is beyond all human conception. As one has said, "The love that gives with Christ a place, surpasses our poor feeble mind." Well, there it is, dear brethren. God is going to head up all things in the Christ, in Him, in whom we have obtained an inheritance. What a wonderful thing. It keeps us steady in the presence of the fluctuations of the dark days of the present time. Now there can be no doubt that we are in the last phase of the testimony. There is no prospect of things becoming better in outward conditions. I have said that before, I have proved it in my own affairs since then. We need to face the moment in the grace the Lord will afford in the power of the Spirit in simple dependence on a Father's care to see us through what may be a most difficult time in the history of the testimony. In the midst of all the aims and claims of men, nations at such variance and the whole world being marked by a perturbation such as has hardly ever been known before, the saints are to anticipate the tranquillity of the kingdom by coming under the domination of Christ.

That is why, dear brethren, I referred first to Genesis for I have not at all in mind to outline what may be doctrinal, but as our brother remarked in his word last night, that what is practical may engage us and that, of course, brings us to the man who is speaking, Jacob. He represents here, in a certain way, a finished product. The Spirit of God has given us many chapters disclosing items of his history, his mistakes, his lessons, and of the unceasing grace that cared for him, and that grace is towards us. I believe one of the most remarkable things about Jacob's history is the way in which the faithfulness of God is exemplified in His dealings with him, faithfulness to a promise that He made right at the outset. He says, "I will not leave thee until I have done what I have spoken to thee of," Genesis 28: 15. I have no doubt that came as a ray of light in many a dark moment. May I speak to you dear young people, for there are many here, I would like to say simply that what God has put His hand to secure in your soul, He will achieve. You will make the more progress the more you submit to Christ, but He will have His way in the end with every one of us. Indeed,

I would say that to us all. He has thoughts of blessing and He has put His hand to a great work. He has put His hand to secure likeness to Christ. Is He to be thwarted? Not at all.

And Jacob was on his death-bed. That he had learned his lesson is clearly seen in that he crossed his hands in blessing the sons of Joseph. We do not know when God communicated His mind to him specifically, but I would suggest, dear brethren, that he had learned in the experience of his soul that the first man was being passed over and that God is taking up the saints in relation to another Man and Oh, what light that is. He crossed his hands wittingly and he says "I know," Genesis 48: 19. I do not think this is mere superiority which can be very obnoxious. I think it is the voice of experience, dear brethren, leading us to know experimentally that what God has in mind is to fill the scene with man after the order of Christ.

Now when it comes to Jacob blessing his own sons the sons of Jacob, with all that that implies but then "Listen to Israel your father." Though retaining as long as his responsible history continued, a sense of the grace that met him as Jacob, he is not forgetting the dignity he had as being blessed of God and made a prince, and he is speaking in a fatherly way and to the brethren in company. We learn much, dear brethren, as we gather together. Some of us, of course, need as it were private tutorship because we are backward, and the Lord is not behind-hand in giving us that if necessary, but there is such a thing as gathering together. I believe this character of meeting has come to stay, not that this is the only type of gathering together, but it seems from our experience that God is signally blessing this character of meeting such as on this occasion. No doubt there needs to be much wisdom and we shall settle down to a convenient arrangement. We surely have been encouraged that divine support has been afforded during the present season together. And so the word is "Gather yourselves together," so that each would learn from what was said to the other. There is no lesson any saint has to learn that I have not to learn. We sometimes make an attempt to interpret what the Lord may be saying to one another. I would suggest, dear brethren, that it is far better to let the Lord do His own interpreting. He moves with divine accuracy and power so that whatever occurs to anyone else I can take it to myself. This will save us from being critical and pointing the finger, for how readily we do that.

What is in mind now is that Jacob does not mince matters. He passes over his first three sons with a remarkable rapidity, for if my understanding of the chapter is correct, the two main types of Christ in the chapter are Judah and Joseph, with Benjamin, of course, linked with Judah, but Judah and Joseph. Judah stands for the establishment of the kingdom and Joseph stands for the establishment of what belongs to the family circle that is going into eternity. So you get the "bounds of the everlasting hills." It is figurative language, and it goes beyond the bounds of the time scene. In this chapter we can see what it meant for Jacob to have witnessed what had occurred in his first three sons.

He speaks of Reuben as to what he was. "Thou art my firstborn, My might, and the first-fruits of my vigour: Excellency of dignity, and excellency of strength." But it is of no value in the divine realm because it is all of the flesh and there is written over these first three sons, "The flesh profits nothing." Paul learned it, "That in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell," Romans 7: 18. We repeat these things, dear brethren, but what hopes we have at times and how we need to be disciplined out of them, for God has taken us up not in regard to what we are in the flesh, but what we are as linked with Christ. Our very standing in the divine realm is in Christ above for He "has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification," Romans 4: 25. And nothing can be added to that. I believe, dear brethren, we are to learn how to enjoy the standing God has given us in Christ, so that the blessed Spirit may occupy us with the One in whom we are before God, and work out His features, so that there is a corresponding answer practically in the saints.

Well now, Reuben is dismissed, Simeon and Levi also. Their deflections are very different, but the result is the same, features of the man that can never please God, and now we come to Judah. I believe the whole thing, dear brethren, is unintelligible unless we keep our eye on Christ. Judah means praise, and Christ is to be praised. He certainly is. But He is going to secure praise and He is going to dominate in this scene until praise is extant throughout the whole scene. "Let everything that hath breath praise Jah, Hallelujah!" Psalm 150: 6. That will be the result of the kingdom, and so I want to speak now, dear brethren, of what is established in that blessed Man, for behind the rule of the kingdom are all the feelings of the Man. I speak to the young people again, do not allow the thought in your mind that God is arbitrary. He is inviting us all to come under the sway of Christ. Well, dear brethren, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the One who has accomplished redemption. One is thankful to God for the way in which redemption has come back to the fore in ministry in our day, to help our apprehension of the love that lay behind it, ever beyond human ken, something that leaves us with a sense of wonderment and yet the basis of everything and how complete it is. I would remark in passing that in Scripture redemption is always presented as a complete thing. There may be progression in our souls as we come under the power of it; as we yield to the claims of love divine, but oh, dear brethren, redemption in Scripture is always complete because it is the work of Christ. How complete it is is shown in this reference "Judah is a young lion; From the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stoopeth." Oh, dear brethren, what a stoop! I know this is only figurative, but what a stoop it was. 'From Godhead's fullest glory, down to Calvary's depth of woe!' We become accustomed to

these things, but the Spirit of God has a way of affecting us. "He layeth himself down as a lion." Not only did He lay in death; I think all our hearts were touched with a fresh impression today as to the place where the body of Jesus had lain, as though even in death itself He retained the initiative. But I believe the reference here is the complete restfulness that marks Christ, all the work having been done. "Who will rouse him up?" He has grappled with the foe. He has come out into the arena, may I say, on behalf of God, and He has completed the work. We are to know it and touch the glory of it, "It is finished," it is a testimony of the basis on which the kingdom is established, on the ground that Christ has glorified God in the very place of sin and He is now at His right hand.

And so "The sceptre will not depart from Judah." God has designed it, "Nor the lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh come, And to him will be the obedience of peoples." Now it is clear that as we become obedient in the kingdom we get withdrawn from the world. There really is nothing more important that our position in this wicked world should be defined by allegiance to Christ, not merely by our coming into the kingdom as the subjects of blessing, but as entering the sphere the Spirit is available to open up all that God has in mind in redemption, for redemption really has in view that God has His portion and that we are blessed. Oh,

how we are blessed! We are blessed beyond human expression and indeed Paul says "In whom we have redemption," Ephesians 1: 7. There is not the slightest doubt that the Scriptures show that redemption was effected for God and we are the blessed objects of His love that benefit from it. And so to Him, to this one blessed Man shall be the gathering of the people. It may be rendered 'obedience,' but from the practical point of view there is not much difference, for if I am in obedience to Christ, as Paul could say, "Legitimately subject to Christ," (1 Corinthians 9: 21), it is the way out of the domination of the flesh. It is the way out, dear brethren, of the rule of the world. It is the entrance into the sphere of things where only one will obtains and that is the will of God. The One who is on the throne, dear brethren, has for ever glorified the principle of obedience by going into death. He is not placing something upon us arbitrarily. He is setting out the glory of it and He is now in the place of command. He is a personal friend to every subject of His kingdom. And so "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm," Isaiah 32: 1, 2. I say, dear brethren, one of the effects of these meetings is to be better acquainted with Christ, holy resolves in spiritual power to remain under His sway. Think of the sceptre, think of the lawgiver. Think of what will be demonstrated, dear brethren, in a quickly coming day in

the very place where all the confusion is seen now and then think of what is established in Christ on high and the blessed Spirit here, so that Shiloh comes to us now. It is really more than peace, it is a stronger word. It really means tranquillity, something, dear brethren, that may keep us steady amidst all the surging waves of the sea. Things happen circumstantially, and nationally and in gatherings, in households and in the widest sphere of this world's politics, but I believe it will always be found that those who are under the domination of Jesus, the obedient One, will find there is a tranquillity of soul that nothing upsets. The kingdom is established not only by Christ on high, but the Spirit down here, so there is moral correspondence in the saints down here to what is above. In the kingdom chapter in the New Testament, chapter 14 of Romans, it says "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," verse 17. It would seem that righteousness, peace and joy are all connected with the Spirit. Righteousness has been secured by Christ on the cross, and God has declared His righteousness, because man had not any, and we have Christ as our righteousness, but as having the Spirit in the kingdom we are to be marked practically by the very thing that is conferred upon us in grace. No person in the good of this would want to touch anything unrighteous, for we are to be maintained under the sway of Christ and in the power of the Spirit. Truth in the inward parts is the thing that must touch us all and as we know, the work of righteousness is peace. Happy is the man who condemns not himself in that which he allows, and sometimes there is much unsettlement because of contact with things that are not of God. If I learn to move in the first principle of the kingdom, that is righteousness, I shall learn what peace is, and certainly what joy is. The Spirit of God being here, a divine Person indeed, there is a power which is of God, to effect these things and the result is there is something which is invulnerable. I believe unless we touch these things, in the kingdom what properly belongs to the assembly and the body of Christ will hardly be known by us, for the way into the assembly as far as soul history is concerned must be through the kingdom. In Matthew's gospel, the gospel of the assembly we have so much stress on the kingdom. Nearly all these parables are connected with the kingdom and a great many things that guide us in assembly procedure are linked also with the kingdom of the heavens which shows, in the enjoyment of our spiritual privileges what is moral must run alongside.

Well now, the result of Romans 14 is that we have the same regard for one another, we are "like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus," Romans 15: 5. Oh, how different from what has been introduced by the enemy into this world. They level everything down; God levels everything up.

He grants all His saints a divinely given status which enables us to be like-minded to one another. How much status weighs with us, money or ability or what-not. The kingdom helps all this to find its own level, but it is in view "That we may with one accord, with one mouth, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 15: 6. That is, I apprehend, dear brethren, the result of coming into the kingdom and being set together under the sway of Christ on high and under the guidance of the Spirit down below. The Spirit of God delights to take the features of that Man and cause us to admire them and then works them out practically in our souls. If we stand true, dear brethren, to what God is operating in our souls, we shall do well. May I again call your attention to the quotation already before us, 'Overcoming is secured by not surrendering.' It is a question of standing firm. We may at times be confronted with the powerlessness of the flesh but we have not been taken up in regard to what we are in ourselves, but in regard to Christ, for He is above and the Spirit of God down here, giving divine power in the soul that is commensurate with the truth itself. And I would like to say again, "Behold your king!"

Now for a moment to speak of another side of the truth, for we should pay perhaps more attention than we have done to the fact that the saints are the body of Christ. I feel I need help, dear brethren, to express what is in mind. The body is a complete idea. There is nothing sectional in it. It has different parts and they have different functions, but the figure used in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12, using the human body as a figure, would show that all are necessary. There is perhaps somewhat of a tendency to vest practically everything in those that are prominent and if we do that it has the result that those we speak of as the rank and file become more or less nonentities and that is not the divine thought at all. That which derives from Christ, dear brethren, the whole of it, may I say, is of paramount importance and all is to be available for the functioning according to the divine pleasure. It has often been remarked that the gifts as mentioned in the first part of the chapter are with a view to something, "for the perfecting of the saints with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ," Ephesians 4: 2. So that those who minister should always have all the saints in view. I know we have to work things out practically with those who are available, but let us not become sectarian in our outlook, "Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ," Ephesians 4: 13. It is in contrast here to an infantile condition affected by any wind that blows. So now Paul brings in the antidote and that is to hold the truth in love and to hold it in relation to all the saints, and to "Grow up to him

in all things, who is the head, the Christ." Now I have in mind to suggest, dear brethren, that we might be a little more concerned as to the truth of the body. That truth, though not local in itself, of course, is worked out locally. There is a tendency for meetings to grow round individuals and for things to depend upon those with ability, and whilst to a certain point this is right, taken beyond that point it can interfere with what the scripture speaks of here. "The whole body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each one part." Well now, dear brethren, "in its measure." I may have to be content with a small measure and in the presence of some I may be made to feel that my measure is small, but I am not to be discouraged, but to learn how to grow up to Christ, to learn to derive from Him in the power of the Spirit what is necessary for me to fill my part. It may be that my measure will increase, but measure is not the aim, Christ is the aim. In the Scriptures you will find in several cases persons that are prominent and well known, named, but alongside them are persons that are not named, and yet fill a very happy part in the position. The desire for prominence, dear brethren, is a very great snare. That some have to have it is in the ways of God, and God generally gives discipline to keep balance, but when it becomes an aim, it is a snare, always. Now, to illustrate what I have just said, you remember that in Luke 8 we are told that the Lord "went through the country city by city and village by village, preaching and announcing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him," we know who they were; and "certain women," some of whom are named, among whom was the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward and Mary who was called Magdalene, but the Scripture also adds "many others." They are not named. We know nothing of them. We do not know whether they were young or old, rich or poor, but they were in that company, content with an unnamed position, to fill a part which must have been peculiarly acceptable to Christ. Indeed for the encouragement of the sisters, Paul speaks in Philippians of some as requiring help, who had been fellow labourers with him in the glad tidings, and the 'them' is in the feminine. The Authorised Version states 'those women.' They were not mentioned by name. Their names were written in the book of life as though they were content with that. I believe it is the spirit of service without the place that service gives being an aim. So, if I speak of Paul, he was going to send Titus with the bounty of the saints. Well, Titus is the well-known brother. He is an apostle's delegate. He had an epistle written to him. You may say he has a world-wide name, but there are two others sent with him and they are both unnamed. There is room for us, dear brethren, every one of us, to fill our part. So Paul says, "We have sent with him the brother whose praise is in the glad tidings through all the assemblies," 2 Corinthians 8: 18. Some will say that that was Luke, and possibly it was, but he is unnamed. "And we have sent

with them our brother whom we have often proved to be of diligent zeal in many things, and now more diligently zealous through the great confidence he has as to you," 2 Corinthians 8: 22. What a commendation! We do not know how his zeal showed itself. He had learned to function as growing up to Christ, "According to the working in its measure of each one part." Well, now there is much to be said about growth, but I am not going to enlarge much upon it, except just leave an impression that Christ is the object and we are to grow up to Him in *all things*. There is growing, may I say, morally. It is perfectly true that we cannot by taking thought add to our growth one cubit (Matthew 6: 27), but it is also clear that we are exhorted to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That stands over against the error of the wicked, and falling away from our own steadfastness, and it is up to us, so to speak. That is what Peter would suggest. And then there is full growth and what belongs to full growth, "full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil," Hebrews 5: 14. He is not taken unawares by reason of something that is spiritually false, but he intuitively knows whether the thing is of God or not. Then, of course, there is the growing by the true knowledge of God, but here it is growing in holding the truth in love and growing up to Him in all things. It is the only way, dear brethren. Oh, how frail our minds are. However, a person formed in love has got the power to enjoy things. Love is the thing which is going to fill eternity and has a great power now.

We are not to merely acquire knowledge in a mental way, but to hold the truth in love, the truth as to God, the way He has come out and what He has before Him to secure, and thus find ourselves in an august company that is necessary to God Himself. This is something beyond all human thought, and the way we fill our part in it as growing "up to him in all things, who is the head, the Christ." We are to grow in appreciation of Christ, and the more we give place to the blessed Spirit by whom we are baptised into one body the greater He will make Christ to us. We feel He delights in holding us together, united in the appreciation of the One who is the Head, and I believe, dear brethren, this is a prelude to eternity, not the kingdom side of things at all, not the solving of moral issues, but the self building up of the body in love. It is a substantial thing that comes about, at the present time, but is so suitable to eternity that God will transplant it.

That is what was in mind. We have had a time in these meetings that is capable of being very much blessed of the Lord and I trust that it may have the effect of attaching our hearts more and more to the One who is designed to fill the central place in the universe. One is thinking, dear brethren, of Paul's

prayer in chapter 3, "That the Christ may dwell through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love," Ephesians 3: 17.

We have had a touch this very day of what the presence of the Spirit amongst us does. We cannot leave out faith or lessen its importance, for through faith we apprehend what God has before Him, the assembly as linked with Christ, the saints and their association with Him, but these things are enjoyed only by the Spirit. We look forward to the world to come with all its blessings in the place which has been the scene of such disaster, but more than this, we anticipate eternity. The blessed One whom we know and through whom we have such a marvellous place, is the centre of the divine realm - God's beloved Son. We are thus drawn into the very centre of all that God has before Him for His pleasure and the nearer we keep to Christ, dear brethren, the more scope the Spirit has to enlarge our souls in the blessedness of it all now.

May the Lord bless the word for His Name's sake.